A 000 086 006 4
UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY

WRIGHT #1339 [BY MRS. CECELIA VIETS (DAKIN) JAMISON]
FIRST EDITION.

Not common.

WOVEN OF MANY THREADS.

Mrs Hamilton

"La vie complète! C'est le programme de la renaissance. Il est bon que l'âme essaie de toutes les attitudes. Il est bon que l'homme multiplie ses sentimens et ses pensées ; les esprits et les cœurs en friche ne sont pas agréables à Dieu. Il est bon que l'homme sache rire, aussi bien que pleurer ; si le travail et la douleur sont sacrés, les plaisirs purs n'ont rien qui offense la suprême sagesse."

"Hast thou suffered?"
"No."
"Then this book is not for thee."

BOSTON:
JAMES R. OSGOOD AND COMPANY,
Late Ticknor & Fields, and Fields, Osgood, & Co.
1871.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1871,
BY JAMES R. OSGOOD & CO.,
in the Office of the Librarian of Congress, at Washington.

University Press: Welch, Bigelow, & Co.,
Cambridge.

CONTENTS.

Chapter		Page
I.	Helmsford Hall	1
II.	Helmsford Rectory	2
III.	The Heir of Helmsford	4
IV.	How carelessly we go to meet our Fate	5
V.	Only a Dead Leaf	7
VI.	"Two Lives so nearly joined in one"	9
VII.	The Story of Mona	10
VIII.	"O Life, so sweet and yet so sad!"	14
IX.	"And Time swings wide his outward Gate"	16
X.	Château le Compte	19
XI.	Am I to blame?	22
XII.	Tombs and Pictures	25
XIII.	In Search of Happiness	29
XIV.	Santo Spirito	33
XV.	San Michele	36
XVI.	Villa Aldobrandini	40
XVII.	Capella del Coro	42
XVIII.	Il Maestro	46
XIX.	Mrs. Tremaine and the Prince Conti	49
XX.	A Useless Quest	53
XXI.	Am I worthy to be your Friend?	56
XXII.	Was it Poverty or Shame?	59
XXIII.	Let me live in the Present	61
XXIV.	The Retreat of a Suffering Heart	63
XXV.	The Charity of the World	65
XXVI.	I seem to have heard that Voice before	69
XXVII.	Lady Dinsmore and the Maestro	70
XXVIII.	Only a little Marble Cross	73

2051414

XXIX. The Tide that bears us on 77
XXX. All is over between us forever 81
XXXI. Why? 84
XXXII. By the Sea 86
XXXIII. Sans Souci 89
XXXIV. The Romance of Lady Dinsmore's Life 93
XXXV. How it ended 96
XXXVI. I have loved you from the first 98
XXXVII. The Battle of Castel Fidardo 101
XXXVIII. At last Face to Face 103
XXXIX. Under the Light of the Moon 106
XL. Richard Vandeleur's Reparation 108
XLI. The Convent of the Sacré Cœur 113
XLII. Neither Poverty nor Shame 116
XLIII. Under the Light of Stars 120
XLIV. She smiled in the Face of Death 124
XLV. Helmsford Hall 126

WOVEN OF MANY THREADS.

CHAPTER I.

HELMSFORD HALL.

HELMSFORD HALL, and the family of Vandeleur, dated back to the reign of Henry VI. There seemed to be a strange fatality connected with the birth of sons, for never but one in each generation lived to reach his majority. It was always Richard Vandeleur of Helmsford, — the name of father and son since the earliest records of the family.

In remote generations there had been many lovely daughters who had married and given children to the noble house, but not to the proud name.

It was a tradition in the family, that, when the War of the Roses ended, and Henry VII. presented his trusty servant and friend, Richard Vandeleur, with the broad lands of Helmsford, he had also offered him a title, which the brave soldier sturdily refused, preferring to be simply Richard Vandeleur, gentleman; and so it had been for all these generations.

In all England there was not a more beautiful estate than Helmsford, or a more imposing country mansion than Helmsford Hall, — a substantial gray stone construction, of mixed architecture. Around its three sides ran two rows of open porticos, the lower Doric, the upper Ionic. A double flight of massive stone steps led to the grand entrance, on either side of which were couchant lions, holding between their paws tablets bearing the family coat of arms.

From its high position it commanded a magnificent view of distant mountains, hills, and valleys, and, far beyond, the broad, open sea. In the middle landscape were miles of rich meadow land, dotted here and there with the white cottages of the happy farmers of England. Directly under the eye the broad park and terraced gardens of Helmsford, ornamented with fountains and statues, in the midst of which swept two broad carriage drives from the terraces to the massive gates, bordered on each side with stately oaks and elms. Whichever way the eye turned, one saw the verdant representatives of every clime, — pines from the dreary north, magnolia and ilex from the sunny south, and palms from the far-off tropics.

On this day, April 6, 18—, there was the confusion of excited expectation in the appearance of all that appertained to the mansion. For eight years it had been closed, but to-day windows and doors are thrown open, and servants pass in and out with that air of importance that plainly foretells a coming event, for to-night Richard Vandeleur, the heir and last of his name, returns to Helmsford, after an absence of eight years. Within the mansion are unmistakable signs of great joy: the furniture, pictures, and mirrors have laid aside their linen shrouds, and reveal themselves in all their original freshness to the admiring eyes of the new servants. The stately butler is everywhere, giving orders in a kindly, patronizing tone, detecting with equal alacrity a speck of dust in the grand saloon or an unsavory odor in the kitchen.

As the day draws to a close, the housekeeper, in stiff silk, rustles from room to room to see that all is in perfect order. She stops for a moment in the grand corridor, where hang the family portraits, and as she regards the bewitching face of the last Mrs. Vandeleur, she sighs and says audibly: —

"This reminds me of thirty-four years ago, when we were expecting Mr. Vandeleur and his bride. My poor father was butler then, and I was a slip of a girl wild with delight because there was to be some stir in the house. How lovely she looked that night as she stepped out of the carriage and came tripping up to the door, with a sweet smile and gentle word to all! Ah, how soon her bright eyes closed on her young life, leaving the little wailing baby, and my poor master heart-broken! Though he lived ten years after her death, I never saw him smile in all that time. The day she went out of the door in her coffin, sadness seemed to enter, for ever since all has been dull and gloomy. If Mr. Vandeleur were only bringing a young wife home with him, things might be different, but as it is I fear he will be off again to foreign countries. He 's not like his father, — the quiet of the

old hall and the dull country life does n't suit him. He has only spent a few weeks here since he left college, and then he was always discontented and restless. The Vandeleurs have always been so steady and domestic, married young, and lived the lives of quiet country gentlemen; but Mr. Richard is not like them, he prefers his roving life and foreign hotels to his own elegant home, and he has already passed his thirtieth year, and yet seems no nearer taking a wife than he did at twenty. If he dies without marrying, what will become of the estate? There are no Vandeleurs to inherit it. It must go to some distant female branch, and the name will become extinct."

Just then the sound of carriage wheels was heard on the gravel below, and the old lady finished her soliloquy as she hastened down the stairs, that she might be the first to welcome her master.

CHAPTER II.

HELMSFORD RECTORY.

THE slanting rays of the setting sun stole into the west windows of Helmsford rectory, and rested for a moment like golden arrows on the white hair of Mr. Wilbreham, as he lay back in his arm-chair, comfortably enjoying his after-dinner nap.

The room was furnished with comfort, taste, and elegance. Pictures of no little merit adorned the walls, and graceful statuettes the niches. In the windows were stands filled with rare flowers, that flooded the room with a faint delicious odor. A soft carpet in which the pervading color was a warm mossy green, furniture of dark ruby velvet, and curtains of the same rich hue, made the whole as perfect in tone and detail as English drawing-rooms usually are. A bright fire burned in an open steel grate,— for the evening was chilly,— and a beautiful spaniel lay in the warmth on a tiger-skin at his master's feet.

Mr. Wilbreham moved slightly in his sleep as the door was softly opened and a young girl entered. At first, in the half-light, it was difficult to see what her face was like; but as she walked with a languid grace toward the window, and stood with her eyes fixed sadly and dreamily on the distant clouds tinged with the last faint radiance of the setting sun, there was something in her *tout ensemble* that almost startled one with its strange beauty and gentle grace. She was dressed in rich black silk that trailed behind her in heavy folds; a plain, tight-fitting corsage revealed the perfect proportions of the elegant shoulders, bust, and round, slender waist; a collar of delicate lace fastened with a jet pin encircled the throat, and cuffs of the same finished the sleeves, tight fitting at the hands, which were perfect in shape, white, and almost childish in their dimpled beauty. How can I portray her face? It had that rare and subtile charm that always defies description,— a broad, low forehead, from which was turned back like a coronet heavy waves of hair that, at the first glance, appeared black, but in the light was a bronze brown; a complexion as fair and spotless as a rose-leaf, with scarcely a tinge of color in the cheeks; eyes of bluish gray, long in shape, with slightly drooping lids fringed with lashes so dark they gave a shadowy softness to that part of her face; the brows were the color of her lashes, slightly arched, with that mournful droop at the temples one notices in the lovely face of the French Empress; her nose was straight, and in the high spirited curves of the nostrils was just a little expression of scorn; but perhaps in her mouth lay the beauty, the rare charm and fascination of her face. Her upper lip, short and rather thin, but exquisitely chiselled in arch curves, was almost lost in faint crimson lines in the dimpled corners; the under lip was full and passionate, yet there was something inexpressibly sad and sweet in the whole,— something of that grieved, childish expression that one notices in the sad and touching face of the Beatrice Cenci.

Constance Wilbreham, until her fourteenth year, had lived a life of childish, unalloyed happiness. To a sister six years older, and a brother who was twelve when she was born, she had been the idol and pet. Her mother had died at her birth, and her father, after the loss of the wife whom he adored, had lived the life of a stern-ascetic. He seldom went abroad, and only as his clerical duties demanded, and it was rarely that visitors came to the rectory; so in this brother and sister her whole young life was centred; every innocent joy and pleasure was connected with them. Within three years God took them both. First, her sister; she came home one day from a visit to a poor woman who was ill with what afterward proved to be a malignant fever. She complained of feeling cold, and went to her room with burning spots on her cheeks and racking pains in her head. For two weeks she tossed and moaned in wild delirium, never for a moment recognizing the little sister who hung over her in speechless agony. Then the lamp waned, flickered, and went out, and she was laid by her mother under the east window of Helmsford church, with her feet, that had so soon finished the journey of life, toward the rising sun, and her fair young

face upturned to God, there to rest until that morning when the sun shall shine upon her, to set no more forever.

For months Constance was inconsolable, scarcely eating or sleeping, wandering from her sister's grave to her chamber, weeping with her head upon the pillow where she had so often rested, or pressing her tear-stained face almost frantically to the green sod that covered the last resting-place of the beloved dead. If it had not been for her brother, who, fearing grief would kill the child, left his studies at Oxford and devoted himself to her, she surely must have succumbed to her deep sorrow. As he tried every means to divert her, she gradually became more cheerful, but never again the light-hearted, happy child she had been before.

Two years after, that idolized brother, in all the strength and glory of youth, was brought from Oxford to his childhood's home, hopelessly insane. Over-study in preparing to graduate had affected a nervous excitable temperament, and an already overtasked brain, so as to extinguish forever the light of reason. For six months he lingered in that terrible darkness, sometimes gentle and tractable as a child, or again raving in the strongest and wildest delirium.

Constance scarcely left him. Even at the worst she could soothe and calm him with her gentle voice and tender caresses. Sometimes the poor soul, wandering in gloom, would seem to draw near the light for a moment, and she would believe he recognized her; then she would pray in an agony of hope and desire that God would restore his reason, if only long enough for them to receive his farewell. But that moment never came. And as she looked upon him rigid in death she would moan, "O, if he had only known me before he died!"

It was then that all the heroic in the young girl's nature was called into action, as she was obliged to turn from the death-bed of her brother to the sick-bed of her father, who found no strength in his creeds, neither in his ascetic life, to support him under this last blow. Constance, in the great fear that he too might be taken from her, and she be left alone in the world, forgot her own sorrow to minister to him, and lure him back to life. Not until she found her father once more in his accustomed health did she pause to look on the utter desolation of her heart. There was in her nature great power and strength of endurance, yet deep abysses of sadness, and keen susceptibilities of suffering. If no storms had passed over her, the force of her character would never have been tested, and she might have lived in ignorance of her own heroic fortitude. Nevertheless, these bitter experiences left a shadow on her life that time and after happiness never entirely effaced.

To Mr. Wilbreham the loss of this son, his pride and hope for the future, was undoubtedly the deepest sorrow of his life; but it was a sorrow that softened him. He came out of his affliction more charitable, more gentle, and more companionable. This was indeed a blessing to Constance; the tendrils of her young life, which had been so rudely torn from the supporting tree, must needs find another trunk around which to twine. So she became to her father, now no longer stern and silent, but almost childlike in his dependent clinging affection, his constant companion, his only earthly consolation, his last and sole hope in life.

Poor child! there were hours when in the sadness of her heart she thought of her shattered idols, and wept in bitterness because they could not be again restored to her; but still she took up bravely the burden of life, and never acknowledged, even to herself, how weary she sometimes grew in bearing it. It was, then, no wonder, that on this April evening, as she stood gazing into the deepening twilight, her lovely face bore the marks of subdued sorrow and sad, sweet patience.

Nearly three years had passed since her brother's death, and neither outwardly nor inwardly had she laid aside her mourning, and there were times when she longed, with an inexpressible longing, once more to hear his voice, and to see his happy face, as she remembered him before sorrow had darkened their home; but she tried resolutely to stifle the yearning cries of her heart, and to look steadily forward to the time when she should see him again radiant with immortality.

"How papa sleeps!" she said softly, as she turned from the darkened window and paced slowly back and forth in the gathering shadows. "Ah me, how sad I am to-night! I wonder what new trouble is coming upon me. I feel a foreboding I cannot shake off. Or am I getting nervous? or perhaps I study too much. I know Dr. Burnett would say I had taken German metaphysics in too large doses. Well, it may be; but I like study; it is my greatest relief. This stagnant life would kill me in a little while if I did not work. And I believe it is better to wear out than to rust out."

Walking languidly to the piano, she sat down, and, touching a few minor chords, she sang in a low voice, *Una Foglia*, from *Il Trovatore*. And as she repeated the words

"Il tuo destino tanto somiglia al mio"

the tears started to her eyes, and, covering her face with her hands, she wept silently.

Suddenly, on the evening air, from the tower of Helmsford church, sounded the clamor of bells. Mr. Wilbreham, startled from his sleep, inquired of Constance what it meant.

"Why, papa," she said, "have you forgotten? They ring to welcome Mr. Vandeleur home."

CHAPTER III.

THE HEIR OF HELMSFORD.

THE morning sun shone broadly over Helmsford as Richard Vandeleur walked on the highest terrace, lazily smoking his after-breakfast cigar, and looking with an expression half of dissatisfaction, half of pride, on the broad acres before him. There was much in his appearance that denoted his character. The broad, full forehead, and square, firm chin, showed intellect and power; the extreme sweetness of the blue eyes, half mirthful and half sad, generosity and kindliness; the straight aristocratic nose, pride, and contempt of the world's opinion; the mouth, which was rather sensual, portrayed all the weakness and love of pleasure that made him a Sybarite in his tastes and habits; his form was perfect, from his elegant shoulders to his slender foot; his face was cleanly shaven, save a heavy brown mustache, slightly curved upward at the ends; his hair was several shades lighter, and, cut close, lay in short thick waves, except around the forehead, which a premature baldness had left a little bare; the lower part of his face being browned by exposure to foreign suns redeemed his complexion from a whiteness almost effeminate.

There was a sort of lazy grace in his manner, a well-bred ease that marked him at once as a man of fashion as well as a person of wealth and leisure. His character was one of those strange anomalous combinations of good and evil, — a sensuous nature, alive to beauty in every form; selfish and indolent, yet brave and generous; selfish if anything interfered with his self-gratification; generous, perhaps, because it cost him no self-sacrifice; brave, because it was a natural inheritance of the Vandeleurs. A keen, brilliant wit, that saw through the subterfuges of life, and held up hypocrisy and deceit to severe and withering scorn. What he affected to despise in men was the cowardice that made them fear to meet the consequences of their own acts, and a cringing subserviency to the opinion of the world.

In his life he had accomplished but little, and denied himself but little. He had seized the cups of pleasure as they were presented to him, drained them to the dregs, and flung them away, weary and disgusted, because he found no sweetness in them. He had graduated from Cambridge with some honor, because, with good natural abilities and a brilliant and decisive intellect, he had found study but little labor. With much wealth at his command, an unstained name, a noble person, and agreeable, winning manners, not a restraint on his life, master of himself and his fortune, he was welcome everywhere. Pride, and perhaps the latent good in him, had prevented him from becoming a thorough profligate, yet he had sullied the whiteness of his soul in more than one scene of debauchery, and he had known the worst of life in every land, as well as the best; and perhaps in his secret soul was the memory of deeds that would not bear the closest scrutiny of his fellow-men, and even appeared ugly to his own regard. Yet before the world Richard Vandeleur, at thirty, bore an irreproachable name.

There was much in the man, that, if circumstances had called it forth, might have made him great and good. If he had been poor, ambition would have spurred him on to strenuous efforts for a name and position; but what need was there of exertion, when birth and wealth had placed him on a higher pedestal than poor toiling genius ever attains? One other thing might have been the salvation of his life, — if in his earlier manhood he had found the true, strong love of a noble woman, his equal in birth and education, who would have encouraged him to loftier aspirations and higher deeds, who would have elevated him by her affection, and taught him the purity and holiness of love; but such a saving angel never crossed his path, or, if so, he had never understood her. He had been inveigled by aspiring mammas into tame flirtations with insipid girls, and had been the principal actor in not a few intrigues with married women, and yet he had come out of the engagement unwounded, but with a deep disgust for the general frailty of the sex; for, like the rest of generous mankind, he expected to find in the weaker vessel wine of strength enough for both, and because he failed to do so, he condemned all for the faults of a few, and had decided many times, if it were not for perpetuating the name, never to marry.

As he sauntered back and forth on the terrace this bright morning, one would never have imagined, from his passive face and listless manner, how important and varied were the thoughts that passed through his mind. First came the far-off memories of his childish days; his father, always sad, but kind; his grief and loneliness when death took him away; his studies at the

rectory, under Mr. Wilbreham, who had been a second father to him; his college days of grand opportunities, from which he had gathered so few results; then his eight years of wandering in foreign lands; his first enthusiastic delight with the gayety of Paris; his deep draughts of pleasure, followed by satiety and disgust; his quieter wanderings through Germany and Switzerland; the glory of the castled cities; the legends of the lovely Rhine; the wild mountains, cloud-capped; the dashing cataracts, and the murmuring forests, that filled his soul with deep and pure delight. Then his love for Italy, the classic mourner who folds her weeds about her and sits apart from the world. There his heart had thrilled with his first deep experience, as fragrant as the wild brier, as rich and sweet as the blood of the purple grape. There his first noble and enthusiastic desire for fame and glory, touching every pulse of his life, and throbbing in every vein, brought to birth in his young heart the ardent longing to do something for the freedom of Italy. Then was the turning-point in his existence. If a noble soul had been near him to have given impetus to his aspirations, he might have done something for his fellow-men; but as it was, a demon in the form of a friend urged him to a fatal mistake, that left its blight on his whole life.

Italy was no longer to him the pure and classic mourner for whom he longed to give his heart's blood, but in the secrecy of his soul almost accursed from being the scene of his first crime. Then he fled to Spain, with its reckless debauchery, dark, lovely eyes, bull-fights, and duels; to Greece, with its ruins and lost hopes; and then to the solemn East, with the shadows of ages hanging over it. From the shores of the Nile to the sepulchre of Christ he wandered, weary and restless, seeking for forgetfulness and happiness, but finding neither. O, how many hours there were, in the lull of passion, in the midst of brilliant vice, when his spirit longed to go back again to drink of the pure, cool fountain of youth! and yet, lured on by some fatal spell, for eight years he had wandered and sinned; and now, in reviewing it all, there was nothing from which he could glean one thrill of joy or satisfaction. He only felt now that it was all finished, that the best part of his life was gone, and Time had found him deeply his debtor. He must decide upon some future course. He must give up his old Bohemian life, so careless and free, marry some good, patient English girl, and settle down into a respectable country gentleman. "Bah!" he thought, with a feeling of disgust, "what a life! I shall rust out in no time. But I can't live always, and if I should die without leaving an heir to Helmsford, the spirits of the Vandeleurs would haunt me through all eternity with their never-ceasing reproaches."

He was interrupted in his cogitations by the appearance of his steward, with a package of papers and a portentous-looking book under his arm.

"Good morning, Mr. Vandeleur," he said, taking off his hat and making a low bow. "I 'm on my way to the Hall to see if you will have the goodness to commence looking over the books as soon as possible, they have been running so long."

"O, never mind the books!" interrupted Mr. Vandeleur. "They have done without me for eight years, and I think a few days won't make much difference. I dare say they are all right. You have kept everything in good order, and, as far as I can judge, the whole estate is in a flourishing condition. I have no time now. I must go at once and pay my respects to Mr. Wilbreham. Does he still continue in good health?"

"In tolerably good health, I believe, sir, though a little feeble. He 's never been quite the same since his son's death."

The steward waited for a reply; but as Mr. Vandeleur seemed lost in thought he turned away with a sigh of disappointment, for he dearly liked a gossip, and he felt he had missed a chance. As he walked slowly away, Mr. Vandeleur called after him, "I will look over the books some other day, when I feel more up to it."

Then he added mentally, as he went towards the Hall, "What a bore business is! I hate the sight of an account-book. Yes, I must go directly to the rectory. My little pet, Constance, must be a young lady now; I wonder what she is like. She was a lovely child. I dare say she is engaged to some country curate before this; if not, she is no longer my little pet, but a dignified young lady, visiting charity schools, making flannel frocks for the poor, and tea for her father, with equal patience. Poor girl, what a life!"

CHAPTER IV.

HOW CARELESSLY WE GO TO MEET OUR FATE.

RICHARD VANDELEUR sat in the rectory parlor, awaiting the appearance of Mr. Wilbreham.

"How familiar everything looks!" he thought, as he glanced around the well-ordered room, so elegant, so refined, and so tranquil. "The same subduing influence steals over me that always did when I came here, a wild boy, to con my lessons. Can it be that so many years have passed, and I only am changed? No, outwardly all is the

same, but where is the gentlewoman who was all the mother I ever knew, the golden-haired little girl, and the bright, active boy? Gone, all gone, one after another; and yet her chair stands there in the very place it used to, and there is the stool the child so often knelt upon to lay her lovely head in her mother's lap. And Mr. Wilbreham's chair in the other corner, that we so often hung over, our eager, boyish heads pressed together above some book he held in his hand, which amused while it instructed us."

His revery was interrupted by the slight rustling of a dress, and through the open garden door there entered a girl so lovely that his astonishment almost startled him out of his usual well-bred ease. As he arose and bowed, she came calmly forward, with graceful self-possession, and held out her hand kindly, as to an old friend.

"Who can this lovely creature be?" he thought, as he looked at her with a troubled doubt in his face.

"I see you do not recognize me, Mr. Vandeleur," she said. "Can it be you have forgotten your troublesome little playmate?"

"Constance!" he exclaimed. "Miss Wilbreham! Is it possible? But do not think me forgetful when I cannot discern in the charming young lady before me one trace of the little pet I left eight years ago. I had not thought, I avow, that while time had been buffeting and damaging me, he had been more generous to you, and had unfolded my little rosebud into the fairest flower that ever bloomed."

"Pray do not flatter *me*, Mr. Vandeleur; you knew me too long ago to resort now to the usages of fashionable society. Eight years must have changed us all in some respects, or else time were useless. Do be seated. Papa will be with us directly. I expect him every moment from the vestry."

Her manner was so calm, so quiet, so self-possessed, and yet, withal, so frank and sweet, that she completely disarmed the man of fashion. He knew at once all his well-turned compliments and polite phrases would be wasted on the girl before him, in whose face he saw an intelligence and sincerity too exalted for the banter of ordinary society. "Can it be possible," he thought, "that this elegant young lady is the little child I held on my knee, and romped and played with, only a few years ago? Everything about her is perfect, from the waves of her glossy hair to the folds of her white dress; from the belt that encircles her waist to the toe of her slipper; so refined, so pure, so simple."

While regarding her a new and strange emotion swept over him, a feeling half of awe and half of self-abasement; a holy reverence, such as one might experience in the presence of an angel. And for the first time in his life he felt that he could kneel to the purity of a woman, the woman who was henceforth to change his whole destiny.

This new sensation troubled and entangled his ever-available wit, so that he found it difficult to frame the commonplaces he always gave utterance to with such facility.

He was glad when Mr. Wilbreham entered, and the conversation changed the current of his thoughts.

The voice of the poor old rector was broken with emotion, and he could scarcely restrain his tears when he saw before him, in the full flush of health and manhood, one who had been the constant companion of his dead son, who had shared with him in all his boyish sports and more mature studies. Their young heads had bent over the same books, their fresh voices had mingled in the same free games. For three years that beloved voice had been silent. The brilliant intellect, the strong, vigorous frame, had perished at a stroke, while this man, who had wandered far and wide, and encountered danger in every form, stood before him, a strong contrast to his own blighted hopes.

Richard Vandeleur felt a choking sensation in his throat, and a dimness of vision, as he witnessed the grief of his old tutor, and the heroic efforts of Constance to control herself and soothe the agitation of her father.

After a few moments Mr. Wilbreham regained his calmness, and spoke with resignation of his deep affliction. Then the conversation turned on indifferent subjects, and Mr. Vandeleur, more at his ease, gave charming accounts of his travels, of foreign life and manners, of the people he had met, the books he had read, the works of art he had seen, of his wanderings in the East; of his half-Arab life in Arabia, his half-gypsy life in Spain; and of his more refined associations with the most brilliant cities in Europe; — to all of which Constance listened with pleased interest, and he was not a little surprised at the knowledge her questions and remarks evinced. He saw at once she had read and studied much, and that her mind was as perfect as her person.

When the conversation turned upon music, the girl became enthusiastic; her cheeks flushed, and her eyes beamed with interest, as they discussed their favorite composers.

He asked her to sing. With modest readiness she seated herself at the piano, and sang with exquisite taste a difficult Italian composition.

"You understand Italian," he said when she had finished. "You pronounce it with the purity of a native."

"O no!" she replied, smiling; "but I

love the divine language of Dante, and I try to mutilate it as little as possible."

"Constance has had a French governess who lived many years in Italy, and she speaks both French and Italian with fluency," observed Mr. Wilbreham.

After a little more desultory conversation, and an invitation to dinner, which he accepted for the next day, Mr. Vandeleur took his leave, and walked slowly towards the Hall in deep thought; and his thoughts put into words would read like this:—

"Is it possible that I, who have seen and known the most celebrated beauties of Europe, and have not been troubled with any twinges of the tender passion, should, after one hour's interview, be in love with this girl whom I have carried in my arms a baby? No, no; it is too ridiculous, and yet I cannot drive her from my thoughts. How lovely she is! A Carlo Dolce type of beauty. By Jove! she is as superior to any woman I have ever met, as moonlight is to a glow-worm. There is one thing certain, if I can win her, she shall be my wife before the next harvest moon." And then a hateful memory wrenched his heart, and his face grew white for a moment. "But what have I to give worthy of that pure young life? Nothing! nothing but dregs! My God! how she would shrink from me if she could read the blurred page of my past! I wonder if it is ever possible to wipe out all and begin anew? Yes, with her I think I might renew something of the purity of my youth. O, if I were only twenty! Why, I was an angel then, compared to what I am now. It is strange, but I believe for the first time I see myself in my true colors, and they are anything but lovely. But I will never deceive her. No, I will tell her all, and then, if she will marry me, she shall be my wife before the next harvest moon."

And with this resolution his step grew lighter, and he walked almost briskly up the broad avenue to the Hall, thinking, as he went, of the improvements he should make when Constance became its mistress.

It was very strange how short a time had reconciled him to living at Helmsford.

CHAPTER V.

ONLY A DEAD LEAF.

NEARLY five months had passed since Richard Vandeleur's return to Helmsford. It was the evening of an excessively hot day in August, and he and Constance were slowly walking back and forth on the lawn before the open door, engaged in earnest conversation. Mr. Wilbreham was sleeping as usual at that hour and Madame Landel, governess, friend, and companion to Constance, was sitting near the open window, a book in her hand, but her eyes fixed meditatively on the distant clouds.

She was a quiet little woman, neatly dressed in black, with bands of soft gray hair simply arranged under a plain cap. The childless widow of a French officer, she had known much sorrow, and had passed the most of her life in journeying from one country to another, never knowing a home, and scarcely remaining long enough in one place to form those friendly ties which are so dear, and withal so necessary to a woman's happiness; yet her placid brow and patient face bore scarcely a sign of her sad experience. For nearly eight years she had found a congenial home in Mr. Wilbreham's family, and an intelligent and affectionate pupil in Constance.

The day had been sultry and oppressive, but now, refreshed by the dew and the soft breeze, the languid flowers raised their bent heads, and gave forth their delicious odor with unsparing bounty. The west was all aglow with the gorgeous evening drapery of the sun; and the full yellow moon rose serenely above the row of tall poplars that divided the rectory garden from the churchyard, and which Constance always likened unto grim sentinels standing between the living and the dead. It was one of those hours when all nature, and even the unquiet heart of man, is lulled into a dreamy peace; and Constance, leaning on the arm of Mr. Vandeleur, and listening to his words of tender devotion, felt that, at last, her restless heart had found repose in his love. Her sweet mouth had lost its curves of sorrow, the limpid eyes their dreamy abstracted expression; and now her whole face beamed with an almost childish gladness as she listened to his plans for their future. His tenderness and devotion filled the void in her life that had been left desolate by the death of those she loved, and already her fond young heart clung to him with that blind trust, that unsuspecting and unquestioning confidence, which is a woman's rarest charm. Her pure and stainless nature knew nothing of the world, and she supposed the past life of the man she loved to have been as true and irreproachable as the present seemed, under her ennobling influence.

They were to be married in September, much to Mr. Wilbreham's satisfaction, who, knowing himself to be failing daily, desired to see his daughter happily married before his departure.

If he had been permitted to select a husband for his daughter from all young England, Richard Vandeleur would have been his choice before any other. As his tutor

and guardian, he always felt for the wayward boy something of the love of a father; and now that he was to be the husband of his child, he outwardly gave him the place of his dead son in his affection. Every circumstance in this case seemed to combine to render the course of true love smooth, and perhaps there was never a brighter prospect for happiness than that of the lovely girl who leaned so trustingly on the arm of the man who she thought was to share her future life.

And Richard Vandeleur, — was he happy? Yes, at times supremely happy. Yet there were moments in the still night, in the early dawn, when a hateful memory tugged at his heart, until his cheek grew white, and the dew of agony gathered on his brow.

"Tell her! tell her all!" pleaded the voice of conscience, with urgent importunity. Then he would rise up exhausted with the struggle, but resolved to tell her all his terrible history, and so test her love for him.

"If she loves me truly and unselfishly," he would reason, "she will forgive the follies of the past, and trust me for the future. Yes, it will be well to test her love; if her affection is sincere, she will love me none the less, but will rather respect me more, that I have had the moral courage to confess all to her."

His resolution now was as strong as that which he had made the first day of their acquaintance. Yet, when once in her presence, his good resolves would vanish, and he would say inwardly, "No, no, I cannot. I love her, O my God! how I love her! The fear of losing her maddens me, and I prefer any concealment, rather than to incur her contempt. If I tell her, she may despise and hate me. No, I cannot lose her; her love is the only pure affection I have ever known, and I must keep it, even at the price of concealment."

Yet this evening, stronger than ever, the importunate voice was heard, even above the clear tones of Constance, and for the first time in her presence his brow darkened with sombre thoughts.

"Why are you so serious, Richard?" she said, with a little laugh. "Are you regretting that you shall lose your liberty so soon?"

"No, my darling," he replied with deep tenderness. "I am only anxious to wear your easy chains; but I was thinking," he cried, with a sudden burst of passionate emotion, — "I was thinking if there was any circumstance, any possibility, that could separate us."

"Separate us! What can you mean?" she said, with trembling anxiety. "No, surely nothing, unless God should take one of us; and you know, dear, we must not question his will."

They walked on in silence, down a shady path, until they reached a low wall that divided Helmsford Park from the rectory garden. There they paused; and Mr. Vandeleur, drawing Constance to his side, and looking earnestly into the lovely eyes raised to his, said in a strangely troubled voice, "And nothing could tear you from me, my sweet darling?"

"Nothing, dear, but death, or" — she hesitated — "or the knowledge of some crime." His cheek whitened as though a spasm of mortal agony had passed over him.

"But why talk of this? Are you too happy, that you must cloud our joy by fancying impossibilities? As long as we love each other, nothing can part us. But I have been thinking, too," she said in a lighter voice; "I have been thinking how strange you never loved before. In all the countries you have visited, among all the lovely women you have met, it is strange, certainly, you have never found one whom you loved. Richard, are you sure," she said, earnestly looking him in the face, — "are you sure you have never loved before?"

Then a memory rushed upon him, a memory as fragrant as the wild brier, as sweet as the blood of the purple grape; a pair of dreamy, dark eyes, filled with the passion of Southern climes, flashed fire through every vein, and a voice of exquisite tone startled him with its melody. "No, no," he thought with a shudder. "*That* was not love, it was passion. I have never loved before." And he replied, with a voice as calm as though no mighty emotion had swept over his soul: —

"No, Constance, I have never loved before; you are my first, as you will be my only love. The human heart is capable of such an affection but once; and remember," he continued, with a solemnity she thought of long after, — "remember, whatever may happen, I have loved only you. My life until now has been useless, worse than useless. I have wasted my best years, and lived only for myself. You have awakened in me new desires and new hopes; and only with you and through your love can they be fulfilled. You are my redemption; through you I shall be saved."

"Hush!" she said softly, laying her hand on his lips. "You overestimate my influence. I am but a poor simple child, whom you are good enough to love. But if my life's devotion can render you happy, it shall be yours."

"Thank God!" he exclaimed, with passionate fervor, — "thank God for such a treasure! I will try to be worthy of this priceless gift. — The dew is falling," he said, pressing his lips to her damp hair, "and

you may take cold after the excessive heat of the day; let us go in." And drawing her arm through his, they passed out of the shadow into the moonlight; but a gloom had fallen upon his heart which he could not shake off.

"After all," he thought, "why should she know anything of my past? It does not concern my future. It would only ease my conscience to make her suffer, and it could do no good. It is better that I did not tell her. Why should she know? Yes, it is better as it is."

A few weeks later, a wet, windy day in September, Constance stood apparently looking from her window toward Helmsford, but actually lost in deep thought. The next morning she was to commence her new life. They were to be married at an early hour in Helmsford church, and then leave directly for a short stay in London and Paris, after which they were to return, and settle at Helmsford. About her usually orderly room were strewn the indications of an intended journey Open boxes and travelling-bags, dresses, bonnets, boots, gloves, laces, ribbons, in fact, enough to stock a moderate millinery establishment. Conspicuous among them was the rich white silk dress and delicate veil, which had just arrived from London. She had tried them on, and laid them away with a sort of dreary dejection the occasion little warranted, and which, in spite of the excitement of the moment, she could not overcome.

Madame Landel had left her, in the midst of her packing, to give some orders below; and almost before she was aware of it, Constance found herself gazing from the window, as she had done for the twentieth time that day, sad and oppressed, she could not tell why. Was it the weather? A dull, gray mist hung over everything; a slow steady rain fell monotonously. A few dead leaves swirled and turned in the wind until they lodged in the little pools formed in the garden path. She noted all this, as she remembered long after.

Turning from the window with a sigh, "I suppose every one is a little sad the day before marriage. After all, it is a very serious thing to change one's life so completely; but I must not waste any more time, when there is so much to arrange, and Richard will be here soon."

She walked around the room, taking up in an aimless sort of way different articles, and laying them down without any attempt to put them in their respective places. A book on the table attracted her attention. "This," she said, "must be put into the box to be sent to the Hall."

It was a large herbarium filled with beautifully pressed flowers, which Mr. Vandeleur had gathered in his wanderings, and he had brought it for her to look at. Taking it in her hand, some sudden feeling prompted her to glance through it again. Just as she was doing so, she fancied she heard Mr. Vandeleur's step on the garden walk. Turning hastily to the window, she opened it, that she might see if he was entering the door. Suddenly a gust of wind fluttered the pages of the book; and a large, beautiful leaf that had been imperfectly fastened with gum was carried off by the breeze out of the window beyond her reach. She made no effort to recover it, but stood looking at the page as mute and motionless as though she had turned into stone; for on the place over which the leaf had been fastened was written in Italian, in a scarcely legible hand:—

"Gathered in the Villa Pamphili, and arranged for my dear husband.

"MONA.

"ROME, April 6th."

Only a dead leaf had hidden this terrible secret.

CHAPTER VI.

Two lives so nearly joined in one,
So rudely rent in twain.

A HALF-HOUR later Madame Landel entered the room, and Constance was still standing where she had left her,—a book clasped in her hand, and her eyes, fixed and tearless, gazing straight before her into the dull, leaden sky.

"Mr. Vandeleur is in the drawing-room, my dear. Go down to him, and I will ring for Jane to help me finish your packing."

As she spoke Constance turned, the book fell from her hand, and throwing herself on the bosom of her friend, she cried, with dry, choking sobs, "It is all over, it is all over! I shall never be his wife!"

"What do you mean, my child? Are you losing your senses?" and she looked with puzzled scrutiny into the white, rigid face of the girl. She read enough there to convince her that some terrible calamity had occurred, and, clasping Constance in her arms, she burst into tears.

"Tell me all, tell me all, my poor child, and let me try to comfort you; but do not look so, you will break my heart!"

"It is something dreadful, but I cannot tell you now," she replied, in a voice of forced calmness. "I must go to him. Is papa with him?"

"No, your papa is in the library. Mr. Vandeleur is alone. But, my child, I entreat you to tell me what has happened."

"I cannot now, dear madam; indeed, I cannot. Later I will tell you all; but now I must go directly to him."

She stooped and picked up the book, and turned to leave the room. When she reached the door she looked back and said, in a calm and far-off voice, "Put my bridal dress out of sight, I shall not wear it to-morrow; and don't do any more packing. I shall not leave home."

Then, gently closing the door, she went away, leaving Madame Landel half stupefied with astonishment.

Mr. Vandeleur sat before the drawing-room fire, awaiting the appearance of Constance. The door was ajar, and he heard the rustle of her dress as she descended the stairs. Rising, he went forward to meet her with extended arms and a smile of fond welcome; but the strange expression of her face arrested his steps, and his arms fell motionless. Never in all his after life did he forget that white, sorrowful face, nor the stern, tearless eyes that seemed to look upon him with a scrutiny which read his inmost soul. He knew in that moment, as well as he did an hour after, that his sin had found him out, and what he feared had come upon him.

Constance closed the door behind her, and turned the key; then, approaching him, she opened the book and pointed silently to the inscription.

He read it; a flush of crimson spread over his face, and then faded away, leaving him as pale as though Death had fanned him with its white wing. Sinking into a chair he gasped for breath, pressing his hands convulsively to his eyes; for, even in that moment, a dark, beautiful face rose before him, and lips of childish sweetness called him "husband," with the bewitching accent of a foreign tongue.

"Speak," said Constance, in an imperial tone of injured pride and innocence. "Tell me, was that woman your wife?"

"She believed herself to be," he replied, in scarcely audible tones.

"Believed herself to be! I do not understand you. Explain quickly! there is no time to waste in enigmas."

"O Constance, forgive me!" he groaned, "forgive me! I have deceived you; I have hidden from you this dark page of my life, and now fate has revealed it."

"Can it be possible," she said, coming nearer to him, and looking into his face with stern sorrow, — "can it be possible that you — Richard Vandeleur — have won my love and asked me to be your wife, if you are already married, and this woman still lives?"

"No, Constance, as God is my witness, she was not my wife; but she believed herself to be."

"Oh!" she gasped, "then there is hidden a still darker history of crime?"

"Yes, a history too vile for your pure soul to listen to. If I had not felt it to be so, I should not have waited for fate to reveal it?"

"O, why, why have you deceived me?" she moaned. "I was strong enough to have heard the truth; but tell me now, tell me all. This is no time to talk conventionalities. I alone must hear this story, none other but me; and I alone must decide on the result."

"O my God!" he cried, starting up and pacing the floor almost frantically, "I cannot, I cannot confess to you a crime that I fear will separate us forever!"

"Look at me," she said, calmly and gently. "I am young and a woman; my burden will be heavy to bear, and I must soon bear it alone. Then have pity on me and spare me all useless agitation; for, indeed, I have need of strength and tranquillity."

"Poor, poor child, so young, so innocent, how the knowledge of this will shake your faith in the truth of humanity! but I will tell you all, and you shall be my judge. I will receive my sentence from your lips, whatever it may be, without a murmur; but O Constance, I beseech you to be merciful. Remember how young I was, my motherless childhood, my unrestrained life, and my great temptation. These are the only extenuating circumstances I have to offer. Listen, and, as you hope for mercy from God, be also merciful to me."

He took her cold hand in his and led her to a chair, and then, standing before her, with his proud head bowed as one already condemned, and his voice hoarse and broken with emotion, he told her the story of *Mona*.

CHAPTER VII.

THE STORY OF MONA.

"IT was my first winter in Rome. I had taken an apartment in an old palace, with my friend, the Count de Villiers. I had met him in Paris the year before, and we had formed one of those friendships which so often exist between a man of years and experience and a youth new to the world and its temptations. Hubert de Villiers was fifteen years my senior, — a calm, clear intellect; a cold brilliant wit; fearless and brave; generous to a fault; but without the slightest belief in anything pure or good. He laughed at virtue; he styled religion an ignorant superstition of bygone ages, and love a fable and a myth; he scoffed at what he called the folly of self-restraint, and believed a man's chief duty was to enjoy the good the gods gave him, without questioning the result.

"It is needless to say he had an unbound-

ed influence over me. I worshipped him. I believed him superior to any one I had ever known. I confided in his judgment, I trusted in his opinion; and if at times I thought his morals loose, I believed them to be but the results of the world's teaching.

"I had come from Paris a little weary; and, disgusted with fashionable life, resolved to pass my time more profitably in Rome by studying the antiquities of its art and the remains of its lost glory. I found our home in the sombre old palace very congenial to my taste. There was something in the dreamy romance of the narrow stone mullioned windows, the lofty frescoed ceilings, and the faded antique furniture, that was in harmony with my feelings at that period. With my books, music, and Hubert de Villiers for my companion, I anticipated passing the winter in delightful tranquillity.

"One evening, just at twilight, as I entered the door of the palace, a creature flitted in before me, up the broad dingy stairs, looking back over her shoulder as she went, and smiling in an arch innocent way. She was about sixteen, and of most radiant beauty, — waves of glossy hair clustering above a low Greek forehead, eyes of limpid clearness, straight delicate nose, and a mouth of infantine sweetness. I soon learned she was the daughter of the porter; and after that, as she often came to our rooms with notes and messages, I found many opportunities of talking with her. She was as uneducated as a child of six years. She could neither read nor write, but was passionately fond of music, and sang with wonderful taste and expression many exquisite Italian romances.

"I cannot describe to you the charm that innocent, sweet child of nature exercised upon me. It is sufficient to tell you that in a few days I fancied myself madly in love with her; but now, Constance, that I have loved you, I know the sentiment I then experienced was only passion, — wild and sweet, but neither pure nor lasting. There was a freshness, a romance, that pleased my youthful fancy, and, before God, I swear to you, in the first days of my delirious love, I did not dream of the consequences; neither did I intend to injure, in any way, the confiding creature who I soon knew loved me with the unquestioning trust of a child. I devoted a part of each day to teaching her the rudiments of education, and I was more than repaid when I discovered how intelligent and docile she was, and how she endeavored to please me in every respect. I can see her now before me, trembling with eager excitement, blushing, and twisting her slender fingers as she recited with passionate emphasis some romantic story or heroic poem; or as she leaned over the table, with a sort of graceful awkwardness tracing her stiff characters, which she termed writing, looking up in my face with a shy, pleased smile if I approved, or turning away with tearful eyes and pouting lips if I chided. The poor ignorant parents left us much together, only too proud that the grand *Signore* noticed their child. De Villiers laughed and jeered at my Platonic affection, often asking me how it would end; and, indeed, it was a question I often put to myself, for I began to learn that this simple child of nature was necessary to my happiness, and also that her virtue was stronger than her love. My passion increased day by day, until even the thought of leaving her made me miserable.

"Already De Villiers talked of our going from Rome, as the winter was drawing to a close, and urged upon me the need of making some arrangements for our spring and summer's diversion.

"One day I said to him that I did not wish to leave Rome so early, as I was very happy and contented.

"'You mean,' he said, 'that you do not wish to leave your *inamorata*. If you love her, why don't you take her with you, away from the eyes of her father and mother? They will begin to suspect something soon, and then there will be a grand row. You had better take her off quietly while there is a chance; for if the *curato* gets a hint of this he will shut her up in a convent, and kill her with penances, and then you may whistle in vain for your bird.'

"'What do you mean, De Villiers?' I replied; 'the girl is virtuous, and she will never go with me unless I marry her; and, dearly as I love her, I cannot bring myself to do that.'

"'Marry her!' said De Villiers, with a French shrug, — 'marry her! Are you insane? You believe her to be virtuous, bah! I believe her to be cunning, and her old mother has put her up to play that game. But, if you don't want any trouble, why not make her believe you have married her, and then afterwards, if you become mutually tired, as you are sure to do, you can separate, settle a little income on her, which will heal all wounds, and so the matter will end.'

"I cannot tell you how much the suggestion of De Villiers shocked and disgusted me at first; for then, in spite of this ignoble passion, my soul was struggling to free itself from its base selfishness, and I was hoping and dreaming that I might do something for my fellow-men, something for the freedom of Italy.

"But I was young, weak, and passionate. Day by day the evil suggestion grew upon me, until, in an hour of madness, I consented to the crime that has worked out for me such a fearful punishment.

"A mutual friend, who had masqueraded

during Carnival as a priest, agreed to perform the ceremony.

"I silenced my conscience with the resolve, that, after I had educated her, and taught her some of the refinements of life, I would marry her and acknowledge her as my wife.

"I told the poor child, that, on account of my being a Protestant, the marriage must be performed by a priest secretly, in the private chapel of a friend; and until I was ready to take her to England no one must suspect it. At first she protested she could not be married without the knowledge of her parents; but, at last, her love and my persuasion overcame her scruples, and she consented.

"The farce was finished; and my self-reproach and detestation were overwhelming when the innocent creature threw herself on my breast, and murmured, in her sweet, rich tones, '*Marito mio.*' But it was too late to retract, and again I silenced my conscience by renewing my vow, that, in the future, I would make every reparation possible.

"Then followed days of delirious happiness, stolen interviews, and secret meetings, while De Villiers, with wonderful ingenuity, kept all suspicion from her parents. It was during these days, and in some of our stolen walks and drives to the neighboring villas, that she gathered these flowers, which she afterwards arranged with much skill and taste. And thinking, no doubt, to surprise me some time with this hidden inscription, she wrote, with much care, these words that years afterwards were to reveal my crime, and indeed surprise me in a manner the child little thought of.

"More than a month had passed after the false marriage, and I had been so blindly happy that I dare not say I had felt any remorse, when, one evening, De Villiers rushed into my room in breathless haste, exclaiming, 'Make yourself ready as quickly as possible! you must leave Rome to-night, and take Mona with you. If not, she will be in a convent to-morrow morning. I have overheard a conversation between the *curato* and her mother, which leads me to suppose the little fool has told something at confession. How much, I do not know; but they have decided to send her to a convent to-morrow morning, — no doubt, a plan to make you acknowledge the marriage, which, they think, has been performed, or to extort a handsome sum of money for the Church. So, you see, you have no time to lose.'

"Two hours later, a closed carriage passed the Porta Santa Maria Maggiore with all the speed possible. Within it were Mona and myself. The poor child lay on my breast, sobbing convulsively with sorrow at leaving her mother, whom she loved tenderly, without a word of adieu. It was a delicious moonlight night of early spring; and as the carriage rolled smoothly over miles of Roman campagna, she gradually became calmer, her sobs died away, and she slept on my breast. God knows that, when I looked at her pale, tear-stained face, as she lay in my arms like a weary child, I believed I loved her; and if she had only been true to me, she might, indeed, have been my wife.

"I went directly to the little bathing-town of Pescara, on the Adriatic, where I took a cottage for the spring and summer. O Constance! I thought I was happy then. The hours passed away in a sort of dreamy sweetness, and each day added some new charm to the dazzling beauty of Mona. Her youth, her gentleness, intelligence, and purity of character, her love of study, and, above all, her almost slavish devotion to me, increased my affection, and taught me every hour how necessary she was to my happiness. I had firmly resolved never to reveal to her the secret of the false marriage, but, after the summer was over, to take her to Florence, marry her according to the rites of the Protestant Church, which the difference in our religion made necessary, and then go to England, and install her as mistress of Helmsford. She was naturally refined and delicate in her tastes; and my constant teaching and companionship had so improved her, I felt she would grace any position.

"In August the Count de Villiers came to us. I cannot say he added materially to my happiness, for my life during four months had been so tranquil and dreamy, that he, fresh from the gay world, with his irrepressible noisy mirth, rather jarred upon my spirits, and Mona did not appear at all pleased with the intrusion.

"However, he was my friend, and had rendered me essential service at the time of my flight, so I welcomed him warmly, and established him in the most comfortable manner possible in a cottage near us.

"We spent some delightful days together, riding over the hills, sauntering among the olive groves, fishing, bathing, or chatting of the past, while we smoked under the vine-clad trellis of our little garden. In the evening we floated on the moonlit Adriatic, listening to Mona while she sang the wild sweet songs of the *Marinaro*, or the more impassioned romances or plaintive *Aves* of the Eternal City.

"One day, near the end of September, I received a letter from Florence, where my immediate presence was desired on a matter of much importance connected with a

bank where I had deposited a large sum of money.

"I scarcely had time to say farewell to Mona, and place her in the care of De Villiers, before the carriage was at the door ready for my departure.

"The girl clung to me in the most frantic manner, imploring me not to leave her, saying she should never see me again.

"I reassured her with the most tender and loving words, telling her I should return in a week, and then we should never be parted again, and that she should receive a letter from me each day.

"She made a courageous effort to be calm, but there was something in her face that haunted me long after, — an expression of agony and despair, so deep, so unaffected, that when I think of what followed I cannot, with all my years and experience, find a solution to the problem of the human heart.

"At that moment I would have staked my life on the truth and strength of her love and virtue.

"I never saw her again. When we parted then, we parted forever.

"My absence was prolonged to two weeks. At first I received a letter every day from Mona, expressive of the deepest love and sorrow, and the most ardent desire that I should return. Then a week of silence, which was followed by a letter from De Villiers, — *my friend*, remember, — a letter which ran thus. I have not forgotten one word, for a long time they were stamped upon my brain, and I saw them day and night before me in characters of fire.

"'All is fair in love and war, Vandeleur. Your immaculate, innocent Mona has proved herself to be no better than the rest of her sex. For a few days after your departure she was inconsolable, then she wisely concluded a lover near her was better than a dozen absent ones, and so she has kindly permitted me to comfort her with such little attentions as I am only too glad to bestow. Last night she begged me, with tears, to take her away, as she feared your return. I have promised to do so; and when this reaches you, your cage will be empty, your bird flown. I know you will be furious at first, but after a little you will come to your senses, and see the folly of allowing a woman to destroy our friendship. When we meet, which will not be for the present, we can arrange the little matter amicably.

"'Yours as ever,

"'De Villiers.'

"For a few moments I was stupefied at the cool villany of the letter; but as I re-read it the conviction took possession of my mind that it was a fraud, some test to prove my love and my confidence in Mona. No, I could not believe it, it was too improbable.

"I immediately ordered my carriage, and started for Pescara. When I reached the cottage the servant came out to meet me, with a surprised expression on her withered face. 'Had I not met the *signora?* She had left three days before, with the *Signor Francese*, to go to me.' And so that was the end of my romance, my love, my trust, my good resolutions.

"Without entering the place where I had passed the happiest hours of my life, I turned away, and walked for hours on the sea-shore, pouring out my rage and disappointment to the unheeding waves, and revolving in my mind fearful plans of vengeance. At last I had matured them. I determined to follow the guilty pair, and with my own hand add the crime of murder to my other sins.

"I hurried from the spot that reminded me too forcibly of my lost happiness, mad with the thirst for the blood of my rival. From that moment my nature changed, I lost faith in everything, I became fierce, almost brutal, in my desire for the life of De Villiers. I rushed frantically from one part of the country to another, seeking for this man. I spared neither time nor money, but I never discovered a trace of him, nor of the girl who had so deceived me.

"More than a year passed in this useless fever of anxiety and then I began to be calmer and more indifferent.

"Italy was hateful to me, and, ever thirsting for some new excitement, I commenced my wanderings. But there were hours in the silent night when that face of infantine sweetness would rise before me, and the soft tearful eyes look reproach into mine, and then I would suffer the keenest remorse for having left her exposed to the snares of a villain. But gradually that too passed away, and after years I came to look upon that episode in my life as a sweet dream of my youth, followed by a rude awakening, the result of all delusions.

"Now you have heard all, Constance; can you forgive me?"

His face was white and worn, and his lips quivered with agonized emotion as he asked the question.

Constance had listened to his recital in perfect silence, her face buried in her hands; but now, as he paused for an answer, she arose, and, pushing back the hair from her face, she revealed in her calm, set features all the strength of her heroic soul.

"Yes, Richard," she said gently, laying her cold hand on his, — "yes, I forgive you, I dare not condemn you, but I can never, never be your wife."

"O Constance," he groaned, "is it possible you can decide so hastily and so cruelly?"

"Hush! you promised to receive your

sentence from my lips without a murmur. Be equal to your word. I cannot be your wife. It is impossible. You owe a solemn duty to the poor injured child, who my woman's heart tells me was innocent. O man! wise in your own conceit, but dull and stupid to the voice of nature, do you not know, can you not understand, that she loved you, and, if she lives, loves you still? Then how could she deceive you? No, no, she was but the victim to the snares and falsehood of a villain. I beseech you, as you hope for mercy from God, to seek her throughout the world, and, if you find her, make her what reparation is in your power. Nothing would induce me to become your wife. You are no longer the Richard Vandeleur I worshipped. In your new character I cannot, I do not, love you. The hero, the good, the noble, born perhaps of my own imagination, is no longer the man who stands before me; and, Richard, forgive me if I wound you, but I dare not unite my life to one who has stained his soul with such a crime. I freely pardon you, because you have suffered, and you will suffer, but strive to learn with me that self-abnegation brings peace. Now listen to my last request, my only prayer. Leave Helmsford this very night, and do not return until we can meet as friends. I will explain all to papa. I can do it better than any other; and, more than all, I will keep this confidence sacred. My father shall believe you what I have thought you to be."

"O Constance!" he cried, falling on his knees, and clasping her cold hands in his, "I beseech, I implore you, not to be so hasty in your decision. Reflect, think what you are doing; you are driving me from you to endless despair. I am lost, utterly lost, without your love."

"Rise," she said; "this is weakness. Be a man in your grief. Do not let it be necessary for a woman to teach you how to be strong. The future is before you. Whether you ennoble or debase your soul, your own acts will determine. If we cannot be more to each other, make yourself worthy to be my friend; and believe me," she added, with a smile whose divine sadness and sweetness entered his soul, "we shall both find our greatest happiness in doing our duty, and time will teach us, that, though youth and passion have passed, friendship may endure."

"O Constance!" he said, "O more than woman! O pure, strong angel! Now, that I have known you, why have I known you too late? Here, on my knees, as in the presence of God, I swear in my future to strive to atone for the past; and, when we meet again, you shall say I am worthy to be your friend." He arose, a light beaming from his face. "And now farewell," he said, pressing her hands to his lips, while the hot tears rained over them, — "farewell; and when I have conquered myself, you shall hear from me. Pray for me, and watch over me from afar; and if you need me, nothing but death shall keep me from you."

He clasped her one moment in his arms, pressed a long kiss upon her cold lips, and then, turning away, walked from the room with a firm step. And when the door closed upon him, and hid him from her sight, Constance threw herself on her knees and moaned aloud in her agony.

CHAPTER VIII.

O life, so sweet and yet so sad!

A FEW moments of bitter weeping, a silent prayer, and Constance struggled up beneath her burden, prepared to finish the part she had undertaken.

The book still lay before her, open at the fatal page. She took it to her room and locked it in a drawer. She smoothed her hair, bathed her eyes, and then descended to the library to speak with her father.

When she entered he was sitting at the writing-table, a book open before him, but he was not reading. His face was buried in his hands, and he seemed in deep thought.

"Papa," she said, going softly toward him, with a mouth that smiled in the middle but wept at the corners, as Lamartine so pathetically says, — "papa, dear, may I speak to you a moment?"

"Yes, my darling, what is it? Why are you so pale?"

She knelt beside him, and, putting her arms around his neck, leaned her head on his breast, and looked into his face with a tender scrutiny.

"You are sad, papa, — sad because you think I shall leave you to-morrow."

"Yes," he replied, in a trembling voice, pressing his lips to her white forehead, — "yes, I have been thinking of it, and I must confess I shall be miserably lonely without you."

She made an effort to throw all the lightness and cheerfulness possible into her voice as she said: "But, darling, I shall not leave you to-morrow; something has occurred that makes it impossible. Richard must leave Helmsford to-night. It is a matter of importance that forces him; in fact, it is a secret that he cannot explain, nor I either, dear papa; but I am convinced it is absolutely necessary he should go, and I am contented to remain a little longer with you. It is better, is it not? and you are very glad to keep your poor child?"

She had spoken rapidly, as though to prevent all questions or explanations, and by her very lightness to disarm him of all suspicion.

"I don't quite understand you," he said, with an uneasy look, passing his hand over his forehead; "you don't mean that you shall not be married to-morrow, and that Richard is going away to-night without a word of explanation to me?"

"Yes, papa; he must leave in an hour to catch the train for London; and you know he had so much to say to me that he had no time to speak with you. So I told him I would explain it all, and then he felt so badly to leave me in this sudden manner; and now, dear papa, don't ask me any questions. You can trust me, can't you? And, indeed, I am so happy and contented to remain with you."

"Are you sure you are happy, my child?" he said, looking long and earnestly into her face. "Are you sure you are happy?"

"How can I help being happy with you, papa? I have always been happy with you," she replied.

"And what will Madame Landel and the servants think?" he questioned, with anxiety.

"O, as to dear Madam, I will tell her all that is necessary, and the servants are very good. Whatever explanation I choose to make will satisfy them; beside, we must not mind what they think. And now, papa, you will have me to make your tea, warm your slippers, cut your review, and be your naughty little girl the same as ever. Won't it be better?"

"My child! my child!" he said, pressing her to his heart with a sudden burst of tenderness; "I don't know what this means. I don't understand why this secret is kept from me; I only know it is your wish, and so I shall not insist; but I hope, I trust, you are not acting a part, — that you are not wrecking your future happiness by false pride or mistaken duty."

"No, no, papa! believe me, it is better as it is."

He looked into her face again and read something there that told him it was indeed better as it was. And so he said no more.

Then she kissed him very calmly and tenderly, and went away, leaving him in the twilight musing over the strangeness of this event.

"Ah," she said, going slowly up the stairs to the room of Madame Landel, "ah, how heavily this burden presses upon me! I wonder if I can bear up under it until the evening is finished and I am alone in my room. I shall tell Madame Landel she must give whatever explanation she pleases to the servants, and then it is finished. The few friends who knew of my intended marriage will wonder at first, but in a little while they will cease to think of it, and all will be as before, only here —" and she pressed her hand upon her heart with a dreary sigh.

Her conversation with Madame Landel was much the same as with her father.

"And now," she said, when she had finished, "put everything out of sight, and let us forget this episode in our quiet life. In a few days everything will be as it was before."

But her heart gave her lips the lie. She knew things could never be to her again as they had been before. And Madame Landel, although she did not question or preach, knew by the suffering face, which laid aside its mask before her, that a terrible blow had fallen on the heart of the poor girl.

"We will try," said Constance to her friend, before going down to dinner, — "we will try to be cheerful in dear papa's presence."

The evening passed away much as the evenings had before Mr. Vandeleur made one of their party. Mr. Wilbreham said little, he seemed almost stupefied by the suddenness of the change in their arrangements, and he felt he must submit in unquestioning silence to let things flow back into their old channels. As he laid his head on his pillow that night, he felt more than ever how one by one the threads of his life were relaxing, how weary he was of it all, how he longed for rest. He sighed, and said more than once, "If I could have seen her happily married before I left her! But it cannot be, it cannot be."

And Constance alone in her room, with her door closed and locked against intrusion, wrapped in a white dressing-gown, and her long hair loosened from its fastenings, sat before the dying embers, her cold hands pressed to her throbbing temples, her sad, tearless eyes looking inward at the ruin a few hours had made in her hopes, in her prospects.

"Oh!" she thought, "if this one day has seemed so long, how shall I pass all the future days of my life? In the morning I shall say, Would to God it were night! and at night, Would to God it were morning! How shall I act — wear a mask of smiles, and struggle to put down every tender feeling that will arise in my heart, drive from me resolutely every sweet memory of the past? Yes, yes, there must be no past for me; I must forget it, and live only for the future. But O the loneliness, the dreariness, of the present, the longing for what can never come again, the haunting memory of a lost happiness, — will they all combine to render my days a burden? Methinks it would be the luxury of grief to lie in darkness and weep silently, to cherish thoughts

born of disappointment and sorrow; to find my only consolation in the free indulgence of suffering; but no, no, I cannot. For papa's sake I must act a part, I must strive for forgetfulness, I must think only of what will be. I have read in some Eastern story that two angels ever attend us, one with wings of light and the other with wings of darkness, and when we look up and smile in the face of the angel of light, the spirit of darkness quickly throws the shadow of his black wing over us, fearful lest we should forget in the light of our glorious companion that for every joy there is an equal balance of sorrow. For a little while the white-winged angel of peace has walked by my side. I have looked in his face and smiled, thinking he would ever bear me company; but now the shadow of the dark wing is thrown over me, and I fear it will never pass away."

Long, long she sat there, until the gray dawn stole into her room, the dawn of the day that was to have witnessed her bridal. With one glance at her pale, worn face she crept shiveringly into bed, feeling as if she could never rise again.

At that same hour a haggard, ghastly face, with red, swollen eyes, looked from a flying railway carriage out into the cold, cheerless morning.

After a few days, life at the rectory returned to the old routine. The servants wondered and talked but little. Respect and love for their mistress kept them silent. Helmsford was again closed for an indefinite period, much to the disgust of the butler and housekeeper. Constance went through her duties with her usual regularity, but the loving eyes of her father, who watched her with an anxious scrutiny, detected a restlessness and uncertainty in her deportment which was entirely different from her placid nature. She often started up suddenly in the midst of a quiet conversation, or laid down her book at the most interesting chapter, and hurried from the room as though inaction were unendurable; or she would forget to answer when she was addressed, and sit looking into vacancy, from which preoccupation she would start as one awakening from a painful dream. She worked with indefatigable industry, she visited the poor oftener than ever, she took long walks and rides, she read the most abstruse literature, she practised perseveringly, and sang in a richer, clearer voice than ever, always avoiding Mr. Vandeleur's favorite music. She forced herself to fatiguing exertion, so that at night she would fall into a heavy slumber, from which she would awake with a sense of some heavy calamity hanging over her. A red spot often burned on her cheek, her eyes were brighter and larger, she grew thinner and paler, but none the less active; an inward fever and excitement seemed consuming her.

Madame Landel often remonstrated with her, but she only replied with a dreary smile, "My only forgetfulness is in occupation. I am young and strong, my system can endure it, and by and by the cure will come."

And so the winter passed away, and with the spring Constance knew she had but a little longer to act a part in order to deceive her father; for each day he grew weaker and less inclined for exertion, leaving most of his duties to his curate, always saying, "It will not be long; I shall be better soon."

She watched him with a sinking heart, as he tottered, leaning heavily on his stick, across the garden to the vestry, which now he often neglected to do for several days together; when he preached, all the congregation noticed how confused his ideas were, and how his voice failed and grew weaker each succeeding Sabbath. Latterly he had become very dear to his people, and they often said, sadly, "This is his last Sunday. Poor old gentleman, he is breaking up fast."

One Sabbath in early spring he indeed preached his last sermon; but he did not think it himself, saying, when he was too ill to leave the house, "It is a slight indisposition, which will pass away. When the warm weather comes, I shall be better."

When the warm weather came he was indeed better, but in that land where they no more say "I am sick."

CHAPTER IX.

"And Time swings wide his outward gate
To weary age."

ONE evening early in April Constance sat at her father's feet, reading aloud to him from the life of Thomas-à-Kempis.

He was very pale and thin, and as he lay back on his pillow, with his white hair falling on his shoulders, his eyes closed, a placid smile on his lips, and his long, weary-looking hands quietly folded, he appeared not unlike a pictured saint of Perugino.

When Constance had finished the chapter she glanced up in his face; he seemed to be sleeping, and so she read no more, but let the book fall from her hands, and, leaning her head against the arm of the chair, she looked anxiously into her father's face,—anxiously, as she was wont to do of late,—and retraced again and again the ravages that time, sorrow, and sickness had imprinted there.

"How strong our hold must be on life," she thought, "when we can suffer so much and yet live so long! I have not lived one

third of papa's years, and yet I feel so old. O darling, if you could only fold me in your arms and take me away with you! I am so tired, and I so need the long, sweet rest of eternity. You will go away to infinite happiness and leave me here. And what for? Only to long and pine to be with you. I cannot unite again the threads of life where they were broken; no, the web is sadly entangled; I cannot repair this confusion. Soon I shall be alone, and then there will be no necessity to keep up this appearance of interest. What shall I do? — sink into a melancholy nonentity; live day after day, like Mariana in the moated grange, sighing, —

'. . . . I am aweary, aweary,
I would that I were dead!'

If God wills I should live, he wills it for some purpose, and yet my future looks to me like a sluggish, turbid pool, sleeping forever beneath dark shadows, with never a ray of sunlight or breath of wind to ripple its surface."

Her father stirred, and awoke from his light doze. "What are you thinking of, my child?" he inquired, tenderly, as he laid his trembling hand on her head. "O, how this stupor oppresses me when I cannot keep awake during the reading of my favorite books! Well, it seems to warn me of the last sleep that will soon fall upon me."

"Don't speak so, dear; you know this is the usual time for your daily nap, and you have slept so little of nights lately, certainly you must have some repose in the day. Don't you think," she said, looking at him earnestly, and speaking with a little tremble in her voice, — "don't you think you are somewhat stronger and have more appetite since the warm days came? — the winter has been so severe."

"No, no, my darling, I am no stronger. You must not deceive yourself; I have but a little time to remain with you, and I have much to say, my child. This seems a fitting time. I thought to have left you happy under the protection of the man you loved; but God seems to have willed it otherwise, and I must not complain. I should like to know, before my death, something of the mysterious circumstance that has separated you from one I thought in every way worthy of you, and whom I had every reason to believe you loved."

"I did love him, papa," she said, in a low voice; "I did love him, but he owed a solemn duty to another. Was I wrong to insist upon his performing it, even at the sacrifice of my own happiness?"

"No, my noble-hearted child; you did right, and your reward will be peace and happiness at last. I will speak no more of it. I understand and approve of the principle that teaches you to spare me the knowledge of any wrong act on the part of the man you have loved. There are other things I wish to speak of connected with your future. You know after I am gone, dear as this home is to you, it will be yours no longer; my successor must have the rectory; but wherever you may choose to fix your residence, it is my wish that Madame Landel should remain with you. Your mother's fortune, with what little I shall leave, renders you independent. As I have no near relatives to whom I can intrust so precious a charge, I have written to Lady Dinsmore to recommend you to her kindness and protection. Many years ago your dear mother and myself rendered her an essential service, for which she is not ungrateful. She is a most noble and tender-hearted woman, and she has suffered deeply; so she will sympathize with you. If she invites you to make your home at Dinsmore Castle, accept, if you wish, and do not feel under any obligation, as it will be a pleasure to her to repay in this way what she considers a debt of gratitude. She has only one daughter, a few years younger than yourself, who is an invalid, but amiable and intelligent. I hope you will become friends; and in your future intercourse with Lady Dinsmore I am sure you will learn to love her as much as I esteem and respect her."

"Certainly I shall, papa; I have always wished to know her, and I can form some idea of her character by her letters, which you have often read to me; she must be a very sweet, gentle person; but who can take your place in my heart?" she cried, with a sudden burst of emotion. "Who can fill the void in my life after you are gone?"

"It is true, my child, no one can be to you the same as your father. No earthly friend can love you as he does; but I leave you in the care of One whose love exceeds my own. May you be worthy of the high inheritance he has prepared for you! Follow, as you ever have, the dictates of your conscience, and you will learn that happiness does not always come with the realization of our earthly desires, but rather that the truest peace is born of the sacrifice of self."

"Yes, papa," she said, with tears in her voice; "I am beginning to understand it. We are all dull scholars, and it is a lesson difficult to learn; I often wonder why it is so easy for us to follow the selfish impulses of nature, and so hard to deny ourselves the happiness that our nobler feelings tell us was not created for our good. But do not let us talk so sadly. See what a glorious sunset! How long the days are now, and how fast the sun goes north! It already shines on the tower of Helms-

ford at setting. Do you remember, when I was very little, you used to tell me that by the touch of gold on the tallest tower I could always know spring had returned?" She paused, and looked long and earnestly on the massive turrets flooded with yellow light. "Papa," she said at length, "who is the next heir to Helmsford after Mr. Vandeleur?"

"I think Lady Dinsmore must be," he replied, "for her mother was a Vandeleur, and in default of male heirs it goes to the nearest heiress."

"Strange, and Lady Dinsmore has no sons; you say she is kind and charitable, papa; if she ever came in possession, how much good she might do; the parish needs so much a lady at Helmsford." She sighed, and fell again into deep thought; "And it might have been my home. I might have passed my life there, beloved and honored. This happiness was within my reach, but with my own hand I put it away from me; but I did right, and at last peace will come, if not joy."

"Now, papa," she said, trying to throw a little cheerfulness into her voice, "you are looking tired; lean against me for a few moments, and we will watch the sun until it is entirely gone; then I shall ring for Thomas to help you to bed. I fear you have sat up too long, and talked more than an invalid ought."

He leaned his weary head against her shoulder, and watched the sun sink calmly to rest, — as calmly as he was drifting from time into eternity. The golden portals had closed upon the god of day, the shadows and darkness gathered around him, but soon, soon he should see the refulgent light of a new morn, and rest forever in its glory.

Such thoughts as these passed through his mind as he turned, with a peaceful smile, and kissed his daughter, saying, with more than his wonted tenderness, "Good night, and God bless you, my child."

It was the last time he ever sat at the west window, the last time he ever saw the sun sink behind the towers of Helmsford.

A few weeks later Constance wrote the following letter to Lady Dinsmore: —

"My dear Friend, — I trust you will kindly pardon me for my seeming inattention to your tender and comforting letter, but since my dear father's death I have been so bewildered and stupefied by grief as to be almost incapable of the least mental exertion. Dearly as I loved him, necessary as I knew him to be to my happiness, I never imagined the utter emptiness of my life without him. One by one those so dear to me have been taken away, and now, indeed, I feel the entire desolation of a life from which all natural support and protection have fallen, and I stand appalled and trembling on the threshold of a future that stretches drearily before me. I am young in years, but already I seem to have drained to the very dregs the cup of sorrow; and though I have scarcely known happiness, and life has not fulfilled its promise, yet so weary am I that I shrink from any further acquaintance with the future, and cannot forbear complaining that I have not been taken with the others. Do not deem these the first weak complainings of an undisciplined spirit, of an untutored will. No, since my early childhood I have been taught in the school of sorrow, and like my dear father I have tried to learn resignation to the Divine will. Nevertheless, I feel that I have accomplished but half of my work; I must live and strive for something beyond the selfish indulgence of my grief. Like one standing on the confines of two worlds, I must live for one, I must conquer the other. I must learn to bear the will of God patiently, and without leaving earth must understand that heaven is my promised inheritance, and that present happiness is not the only supreme good to which we may aspire. Often, after hours of the deepest discouragement and dejection, there succeed a few moments of calm, or rather of spiritual exaltation, when my heart is filled with a joy impossible to describe. Sometimes, as if separated from myself, my soul springs with a bound into the regions of eternal beauty, of which all that exists is but a faint and imperfect copy. Again, illumined by a prophetic light, time disappears, the veil falls, and I see far into the future; a soul pure, free, and happy, healed from all earth's ills, seems to float in the presence of God as a bird in the air. Then I ask myself why I should sink into dark despair when such happiness is attainable, when I am immortal, and life all too short to prepare for my eternal future.

"Mercifully Time heals the bleeding wounds of our hearts; and although the scars remain, they remind us that we have suffered, and they may serve to teach us humility.

"I have lived until now in the narrow circle of my own home, sheltered and protected by the gentle love of my father. I know nothing of the world save what books have taught me; now I desire to enter the arena and see for myself the conflict men call life. My future plans are fixed. I have decided to travel for some time, to seek in change of scene and climate health for my sick and suffering heart. I have no ties to bind me to England, only the graves of those I love. Distance will soften my sorrow and clothe the sod that covers them with a more tender green, as Time flings his mantle of ivy over the rough and crumbling ruin, hiding the harsh outlines beneath its graceful beauty.

"I cannot express how deeply the tender sympathy of your letter has touched my heart, nor can I sufficiently thank you for your kind offer of a home at Dinsmore Castle. Believe me, my dear friend, it would not be best at present. Nothing but an entire change of country and climate can arouse me from the lethargy into which I have sunk since my dear papa's death. My friend and companion, Madame Landel, will always remain with me; it was my father's wish, and it is also mine. She has travelled much in foreign countries, and her experience will be invaluable. We propose to pass the summer in France, and the following winter in Italy. Where I shall then wander, circumstances will determine. Would not a winter in the south of Italy be beneficial to the health of your daughter? Why not arrange to come abroad also? Before I leave England, which will be in a few weeks, I shall write to you further details respecting my intended journey, and in the mean time I hope you will have decided to act upon my suggestion, as the society of one for whom my dear papa had so deep an esteem and affection would add greatly to my happiness during my absence. Nevertheless, if I cannot enjoy that pleasure, may I be allowed to hope for a regular correspondence, as your counsel and advice will always be a favor beyond expression?

"With many kind regards to your daughter, whom I hope soon to know personally, and heartfelt thanks for your affectionate interest in me, believe me gratefully yours,

"CONSTANCE WILBREHAM.

"TO LADY DINSMORE, Dinsmore Castle."

Early in June Constance had concluded her arrangements, and was about to leave forever the home where she had suffered and wept and smiled under the wing of the white angel called Peace. But it was all finished now. Every record of the past was to be re-read under foreign skies and among strange scenes. She would no more walk the shady garden paths, where her heart had thrilled and trembled with joy at the first sweet words of passionate love. Forevermore to her those scenes must be only as a warm bright picture or a tender dream, whose beauty and grace would haunt her memory with magic power. The rooms where she had sat at her father's feet while she studied, read, or talked as he smoothed with gentle hand her hair, or whispered some tender word of affection; the west window, where she had watched with him for the last time the sunset, while his dear head rested on her shoulder; the nursery, where she had passed her baby years, the pet and plaything of her brother and sister; the old church, where, nearly every Sabbath of her life, she had heard his serious, impressive voice from the pulpit; and, more than all, the dear graves, over which she had wept with the uncontrollable passionate sobs of a child, and later with the deep, subdued grief of a woman,—all these she must leave, and perhaps forever. For who of us can tell, if we go forth in the morning, whether we shall return at night?

With a terrible sinking of the heart she watched each familiar scene fade from her sight as she leaned from the carriage window, and she turned to Madame Landel, saying, with a sob, "Farewell, dear, dear home! Where shall I find a love so tender and true, so patient and wise, as I have known here? Ah, my heart is breaking because I know it can never be mine again."

"Patience, dear, patience; God only knows the future," said Madame Landel, tenderly clasping the hand of the weeping girl. "When you return, you may be happier than your imagination ever pictured even in your most peaceful moments."

CHAPTER X.

CHÂTEAU LE COMPTE.

IN Paris, near the Champs Elysées, at the corner of the Rue de —— stands an antique, irregular pile of buildings, which was once, before Paris had extended itself to Passy, the *maison de campagne* of the Dukes du Compte. At one time it had been surrounded by gardens and parks, which had gradually disappeared to swell the number of boulevards and streets in that vicinity. However, there yet remained enough to make a most charming modern garden, and the passer-by never dreamed that behind the rude, time-stained pile, with its little windows and forbidding gate, was a spot of rural loveliness seldom found in a city like Paris. Above the ponderous door, thickly studded with iron spikes and bars, was a stone entablature still bearing the family coat of arms, with the name "Château le Compte," and underneath hung a neat black sign, on which was painted in white letters, *Pension Anglaise*.

One afternoon in June, when the sun threw the long shadow of the Arc de Triomphe down the Champs Elysées, and the gay, brilliant throng passed out of that shadow into the beauty and brightness of the Bois de Boulogne, a travelling carriage drew up before the gate of the Château le Compte, and Constance Wilbreham looked with something like misgiving at the gloomy entrance. While the servant pulled at the iron chain which served for a bell-rope, she said to Madame Landel, "What a dismal-looking place! It seems to me like a

prison. What ever could induce any one to advise us to come here? I am sure I shall not like it."

"Wait, my dear, until the gate is open. You have no idea how much beauty is hidden behind these uninviting exteriors, especially in France, and then you know we have already written to engage our rooms."

While Madame was speaking a good-natured face appeared at the grating. The *coup d'œil* seemed satisfactory, for in a moment, as if by magic, the great portal swung open and displayed a scene of beauty which caused an involuntary exclamation of delight from Constance. A smoothly paved court, with statues, flowers, and fountains, hospitable-looking doors right and left, and beyond a sunny vista of garden.

In a moment several white-aproned servants bustled out to attend to the luggage, and Constance was met at the door by a tall, elegant-looking woman, who smiled kindly, and said, in an exceedingly refined and sweet voice, "Miss Wilbreham and Madame Landel, I presume? Allow me to show you to your rooms myself; they are all prepared, and I hope you will find them comfortable and pleasant."

Constance returned, with many thanks, the kind greeting of the lady, whom she at once understood to be Madame de Marc, the proprietress of the *pension*. The daughter of a poor English clergyman, she had married a French officer, who left her at his death no other resource than to become a governess, or open a *pension*; she preferred the latter, and finding the Château le Compte to let, furnished, she hired it, and established herself most satisfactorily, making her house a home to her patrons, as well as a comfortable and orderly *pension*.

Constance followed her up a flight of polished oak stairs, to a pretty suite of rooms overlooking the garden, which indeed promised to be both pleasant and comfortable.

"We dine at seven, *table d'hôte*, and it is now six," said Madame de Marc, looking at her watch. "Perhaps you would prefer dining in your room to-day, as you must be very tired after your journey; if so, you can be served here. But use no ceremony, we are quite *en famille*, — thirty persons; rather a large number, to be sure, but all agreeable acquaintances."

Constance thanked her, saying they would prefer dining alone for that day, but after dinner they would take a turn in the garden, when they hoped to meet some of her family.

Madame Landel was already busy opening the boxes and arranging the wardrobes.

Constance leaned from the window and inhaled a delicious breath of flower-perfumed air, which, after the hot, dusty carriage, was most refreshing. She heard the merry voices of men and women talking in the garden below, and caught glimpses of white dresses flitting to and fro among the trees. There was something homelike and cheerful in the surroundings, that soothed her weary heart and brain.

"Is it not a delightful spot?" she said to Madame Landel as they seated themselves to a delicate, well-cooked French dinner. "I already feel as though I should be contented to pass some months here; and this garden, is it not charming? I am so glad to be among trees and flowers; they remind me of dear Helmsford."

The tears started again to her eyes, for she had wept almost constantly during their journey, and her friend felt the necessity of directing her thoughts, if possible, to some new channel. Here she would at least have young and cheerful society, and the amusements and sight-seeing of the gayest city in the world would so divert and occupy her as to leave her little time to brood over her sorrow; so it was with something like satisfaction in her voice that Madame Landel replied, "Yes, my dear, it is all very pretty and pleasant. You know I have always told you Paris was the most charming city in the world, and I am sure you will entirely agree with me after you have passed a few months here."

An hour after, when the long June day was drawing to a close, and the sun threw golden arrows at random among the trees, — quivering, dusky, golden arrows, that trembled, fainted, and fell in soft shadows above the nests of tender birds singing their vespers of love ere they folded their tiny wings for sleep, Constance sat in a little arbor under some flowering acacias and clustering roses, talking calmly but sadly with Madame de Marc of her recent bereavement, for the kind-hearted woman felt irresistibly drawn toward the sorrowful and lovely young stranger. Suddenly they were interrupted by the sound of a clear musical voice calling, "Madame, Madame, where have you hidden yourself? I want you directly!"

"I am here, dear," replied Madame, smiling; and then, turning to Constance, she said, "Here she comes, — our beauty, we call her."

Constance raised her eyes and saw standing before her a form that realized Tennyson's dream of fair women, —

> A daughter of the gods, divinely tall,
> And most divinely fair."

"Miss Wilbreham, allow me to present to you Mrs. Tremaine, a compatriot of yours," said Madame de Marc.

Constance, who was rather cold in her manner, gave her hand with unusual warmth

to the lovely creature, who took it, with many protestations of delight at making the acquaintance of one who promised to be such an agreeable addition to their party. "And now, dear Madame, since I have interrupted your *tête-à-tête*," she said, gayly, "I must tell you why I have done so. Mr. Carnegie has just received tickets for the opera, and as it is the last night of Alboni I am crazy to go, but I shall not go without you; indeed, I shall take no refusal, you must accompany me," she insisted, with a pretty air of authority. "Miss Wilbreham will excuse you for this evening"; and, putting her arm around Madame de Marc, she attempted to draw her away.

"Certainly," said Constance, "I was just decided to go in, as the dew is falling; and, indeed, I am so weary that I shall retire almost immediately."

The three ladies walked down the long shadowy garden path together, and they made a fair picture as they went, for nothing human could be fairer than Helen Tremaine. Tall, but beautifully proportioned, a slender waist, full bust, shoulders and arms like a Greek statue, a small head heavy with masses of golden blonde hair, skin white and pink as the sea-shell, eyes grayish-green with long dark lashes, nose slightly *retroussé*, and pouting, smiling mouth, — all these charms, joined to manners careless and gay as a child's, made her the idol of those who loved her, and the innocent victim of the envious and malignant. She had been two years in the *pension* of Madame de Marc, but who she was and whence she came few knew. That she was married was no secret, but all concerning her husband was a profound mystery. She never mentioned him, neither did Madame de Marc, who seemed to be acquainted with the history of her life; yet she always spoke of her future quite as one would of a single woman's, although every one knew she was not a widow. The Mrs. Grundy of the establishment often shook her head dolorously over her unavailing efforts to solve the mystery of Helen Tremaine's life; but after two years of wondering and speculating she was no nearer unravelling the knotted skein than at the beginning.

The next day at dinner Mr. Carnegie was presented to Constance; he was a tall, pale, intellectual-looking man about thirty, black hair and stiff side beard; long, straight nose; long upper lip; a somewhat large mouth; deep-set, thoughtful gray eyes; and square, massive brow; — altogether a strong, expressive face, which, in spite of a certain shyness and nervousness of manner, made him interesting. He was Scotch, of good family, and rich; an author, for he had written several romances; an amateur musician; a lover of old pictures, old china, old cabinets, and other articles of *virtu*. He had studied much, read much, travelled much; was *au fait* on all subjects, could converse with intelligence on music, art, and literature, as well as the last race at Longchamp, the finest and fastest horses in Paris and London, the beauty of the last ballet-dancer or opera-singer, the last style of hats and dresses, the last religious excitement or political change. In fact, he was a man of the world. Yet beneath all was a good heart, a rather eccentric but noble nature, a clear judgment, and a firm will. But in spite of the strength and resolution of his character he loved with "the love of love" Helen Tremaine, and she played with him in the same way a child would sport with an ugly but faithful dog. She declared to herself a dozen times a day that she hated him, and yet, for the three months they had been almost constantly together, scarcely an hour had passed that she had not demanded some little service or favor, which he was only too happy to grant, in spite of her caprices.

After some conversation, Constance learned that he was intimately acquainted with Lady Dinsmore.

"Yes," he said, "I have often heard her speak of your father as one of her best and dearest friends, and also of Vandeleur of Helmsford, who, I believe, is in some way related to her. By the way, did I not hear he was going to marry a young lady at Helmsford and settle down at last; and, later, some sort of a story of the engagement being broken off, and he starting suddenly for the Danube?"

"It was quite true," said Mrs. Rawdon, an English lady, who sat near them. "I remember, some nine months ago, he came back to London, every one said quite a changed man. He shunned society, and was never seen in any of his old haunts. I recollect meeting him one day in Hyde Park; he looked pale and thin, and altogether very miserable. You must have known something of the affair, Miss Wilbreham, as it happened at Helmsford. Cannot you give us the particulars?"

"I do remember hearing something of the story, but I am unable to give you any further information," replied Constance, calmly, but with sudden pallor.

"How romantic!" said Mrs. Tremaine. And then Madame Landel made some remark that turned the conversation to another subject.

Very soon Constance, Mrs. Tremaine, and Mr. Carnegie, became almost constant companions. They spent their days in riding, walking, or sight-seeing, and the warm moonlit June evenings in sauntering back and forth on the lawn, or sitting under the wilderness of roses, listening to Mrs. Tre-

maine's lively conversation or Mr. Carnegie's more abstruse discussions, which he sometimes varied by an air on the mandolin or guitar, while Helen sang a light Spanish serenade, or passionate Italian romance.

So the days passed away, and Constance was often surprised at the interest and pleasure she was beginning to find in life. Not that she had ceased to mourn, — ah, no! — for often in the stillness of night she would stifle the passionate sobs that rose to her lips as she stood watching from her window the round white moon rising above the lindens and acacias, flooding fountain and statue with its soft white light, and turning the dew-wet lawn into a sheet of silver studded with diamonds.

"Oh!" she thought, "the throbbing stars, the serene moon, and the silent heavens hang over the new-made grave at dear Helmsford, and throw long shadows of the church-spire across the lawn where I have so often walked with one who is now a lonely, sorrowful wanderer over the deserts of the far East!"

CHAPTER XI.

AM I TO BLAME?

ONE evening Constance and Mrs. Tremaine had wandered away from the others, down a long, shady walk to a little arbor concealed among the trees, and overhung with ivy and fragrant Paestum roses; there they seated themselves to watch a flock of white doves that were cooing and fluttering about among the flowers, murmuring their good-nights to Nature before taking flight to their cot, which stood near, half hidden by the embowering trees.

The two girls formed a striking picture as they sat there, relieved by the rich background of foliage and flowers, — Constance with her pale, sweet face, dusky hair, and mourning robes heavy with crape; Mrs. Tremaine, her waves of gold tied back with a blue ribbon, a thin, airy white dress with innumerable little ruffles of lace, confined at the waist with a blue sash, a bunch of scarlet geraniums in her bosom, and a scarlet silk cloak thrown carelessly around her shoulders. She was a little paler than usual and very grave. Constance observed, for several days, that she had avoided Mr. Carnegie, and that he, too, seemed to be laboring under some sudden depression.

"How serious you are!" said Constance, after a few moments of thoughtful silence. "I did not know you were ever sad."

"Ah, that is just what every one thinks," she replied, with a little pettishness in her voice. "I wonder why I cannot be sad, few people have had more to make them so."

"I did not think you had ever known sorrow, you are always so cheerful and happy," said Constance, gently; "will you not tell me what your trouble is? Perhaps my sympathy may be a little consolation to you. I have been well taught in the hard school of disappointment, and I can understand the suffering human heart better than many."

"You are very good, dear," Helen replied; "but, after all, it is not so very serious a matter. Only that stupid Mr. Carnegie must fancy himself in love with me; and because I cannot return his love he imagines he is very miserable, and so mopes and looks melancholy, and that I cannot endure."

"How wrong!" exclaimed Constance, in a tone of reproof. "How can you trifle with the deep, true love in a human heart? You are wrong, believe me, you are wrong."

"Am I to blame?" she inquired, scornfully, — "am I to blame because he has been such a goose as to fall in love with me? I never encouraged him, — *never!* O, men are such difficult things to manage! Just as you get well acquainted with them, and fancy you have taught them the beauty of a Platonic affection, they suddenly assume the character of lovers, and so are no longer useful. I am dreadfully sorry, for Mr. Carnegie was *so* useful. Now I can never ask him to do any more little commissions for me."

"Are you sure you understand your own heart? Are you sure you do not love him?" inquired Constance, with some anxiety in her voice; "I believe under all this *badinage* there is some deeper feeling; and perhaps you really love him."

"Love him! No indeed, that I do not! I love him as a friend, nothing more. I know dear Madame de Marc desires this marriage; but for all I love her, and wish to please her, and my own worldly wisdom tells me it is a desirable alliance, yet nothing will ever induce me to marry again a man I do not love. I have had one experience," she said, with a touch of pathos in her voice; "I know the horror of a marriage without love. No, nothing will ever induce me to take such a step again. I will tell you," she continued; "I don't mind telling you, you are so good, and I know you will not repeat what I say. I keep my secret close enough from the charitable old spinsters in the house, for I would rather be torn to pieces by rat than to fall into the merciless hands of these amiable creatures of uncertain age.

"My mother was the daughter of a poor country curate and the widow of a spendthrift English officer. I was the eldest of five daughters, and the beauty of the family; and as my father left us no inheritance but

his debts, it was expected that I, by my marriage, should rescue them all from poverty. It was always dinned in my ears, 'Helen, you must marry young, and you must marry a rich man,' until I began to look upon myself as a chattel to be sold for the benefit of the others, and so accepted my fate with an uncomplaining sort of indifference. When I was nineteen I was sent to London to be exhibited and sold to the highest bidder. At the house of a friend I met Mr. Tremaine, — a rich banker, a stern, taciturn man, and old enough to be my father. I need not say that from the first he was repulsive to me; yet the marriage was arranged to take place in three months. The more I saw of this man, the more I detested him; I felt a strange fear and horror of him; there was something in his regard that froze my blood, and if he laid his hand upon me I felt like screaming or going into convulsions. Yet I knew I must accept my fate, that complaints were useless, and God only knows how I tried to conquer my dislike. It was only a few days before my marriage, when one afternoon as I sat alone in the drawing-room, sadly thinking of my hopeless future, a visitor was announced. It was a young gentleman whom I had met much in society during the season, and who had formed a warm attachment for me. 'Ah,' he said, 'I am glad to find you alone, for I wish to speak with you on an important matter. Accept what I shall say to you as a proof of my deep interest in your future happiness, and I beseech you to consider well the importance of my communication. Do you know there is insanity in the family of the man you are about to marry, that two brothers have lately died in an asylum? and many say — and persons who know him intimately — that Mr. Tremaine has recently shown unmistakable signs of mental aberration.'

"'O my God!' I cried, 'is this true? Then, indeed, my worst fears are confirmed; I have felt it; I have known it!' I thanked the gentleman for his friendly interference, and promised to listen to his timely warning. That night my mother and sisters arrived to witness my sacrifice. I was to be married from the house of my friend in London, and go directly to a magnificent mansion in Bryanstone Square; the settlements were all arranged with princely liberality, the presents were not unworthy the nuptials of a queen. Everything exactly suited the ambition of my mother, who, when I knelt before her, and laid my head upon her lap, pouring out the story of this odious discovery and my horror of the marriage, only refused to listen, declaring it to be the malignant slander of an interested party. I saw it was useless; I must submit. I was too weak to stem the tide of opposition, and the marriage must take place. At times I resolved to put an end to my miserable existence; again, to fly before the fatal day, and conceal myself in some secluded spot. But at that time I had not strength of character to put either resolve into execution. So I drifted on helplessly to the hour of my sacrifice. It was finished, and I was installed mistress of my noble mansion.

"Whether my husband, knowing the wrong he had done me, and wishing to atone in some measure, acted from generosity I cannot say, but he insisted that my mother and sisters should make their home with me. For them all was arranged satisfactorily, but for me, poor victim, how can I describe my fear, my horror and agony, when I was left alone with that man, whose every peculiarity I magnified into madness? Of course, my misery exaggerated the evil. Though my mother, sisters, and friends pretended to be blind to the fact, he was even at that time the victim of the first symptoms of insanity. A week passed away, and I could endure my terrible situation no longer; real necessity gave me strength.

"One morning, after having passed a night of indescribable horror, I determined to leave him. Madame de Marc was the daughter of my father's dearest friend; with her I resolved to seek a home and protection. Before night I was on my way to Paris. I left a letter for my husband on his dressing-table, telling him of my true feelings, entreating him not to follow me, and recommending to his kindness my mother and sisters. I cannot tell you what I suffered, even after I found myself free from his presence. I felt there was no further hope nor aim for me in life, and all that remained was to lie down, fold my hands, and sink into the forgetfulness of the grave.

"You wonder my face bears no signs of my suffering. I was young, and the struggle was brief. Like the sapling on the hillside, I bent while the storm passed over me, and when the calm came I raised my head again and looked to Heaven. Ah, but the memory still remains! It is two years since, and I cannot think of it now without a shudder. Whether it was that the disease had already made rapid progress or from disappointment caused by my sudden flight I cannot say. In less than three weeks after my marriage my husband was carried to the same asylum where his brothers had died hopelessly insane. My mother and sisters went back to their poverty and seclusion, and I have remained here ever since. A year ago, a lawyer in London, a friend of our family, at the instigation of my mother, petitioned that my marriage might be annulled by an act of Parliament, which, in consideration of my youth, and the sad circumstance, was granted, and I was allowed the income my

husband settled upon me, which I divide with my mother and sisters.

"Now you have heard my miserable history, do you think me to blame that I will not marry a man I do not love? To think of it," she said, with a shudder, "brings back all the old suffering. I like Mr. Carnegie, I respect him, but I do not love him. Am I to blame that I do not love him?"

"No, certainly," replied Constance, "you are not to blame. The human heart is a mystery few can understand; it is impossible to control it and teach it submission. Let me advise you to tell Mr. Carnegie honestly your true sentiments, and if he is the noble man I believe him to be, he will not be the less your friend because he cannot be your lover. Now let us go in. The sun has set, and the stars are already shining like diamonds on the brow of night. They teach us, even in the hours of darkness and distrust, that there are gleams of God's mercy mingled with all."

They arose and, arm linked in arm, sauntered slowly towards the house. Entering the principal garden walk, they saw Mr. Carnegie pacing back and forth, his hands clasped behind him, his head bent, and his whole air sad and preoccupied. In a moment Helen was at his side, her lovely face aglow, and her eyes beaming with earnest sympathy.

"O Mr. Carnegie," she said, "I am very unhappy to see you so sad. Let us forget the miserable conversation of the other day, and be the same as before. I so much need your friendship; but indeed I can love you only as a friend, a brother. Do not ask anything more from me, for I cannot love you, and yet I cannot be happy without your friendship!"

"You have my deepest, truest friendship, Helen," he replied, taking both her hands, and looking with intense love into the clear eyes raised to him. "Yes, I am too happy if I can be even so much to you as a friend. I will forget what has passed, and never refer to it again. Only command me. My greatest pleasure is to be at your service."

"Well, then," she said, passing her arm through his in her free, childish way, "now you are very good, and your old self. Do you know Madame de Marc has decided to accompany us to Fontainebleau for a week? and we go to-morrow; but we cannot go without you. Say you will make one of the party."

"Certainly, if you wish it; but of whom is the party composed?"

"Only Miss Wilbreham and Madame Landel, Madame de Marc and me. Are these a sufficient inducement?" she inquired with a shy little laugh.

The next day they all arrived at Fontainebleau in excellent spirits. Even Constance enjoyed the charming scene, and often a smile trembled around her mouth, but disappeared quickly, as though it were treason to the dead to laugh and be happy.

They found excellent rooms at the *Aiglé Noir*, a pretty little hotel near the palace, and spent the most of their time in the beautiful gardens that surround this most exquisite of all the royal *châteaux* of France.

They wandered through the long avenues of clipped yew and laurel, sitting on flowery banks amidst a wilderness of roses, watching the ever-changing colors of the many fountains or the graceful swan floating majestically on the bosom of the placid lake, and the little painted boats, with white sails and silken pennons fluttering in the breeze. Sometimes they would gather around the immense marble basins filled with aquatic plants, amongst whose shadows sported myriads of gold and silver fish, and wonder if it were the same to which Louis XIV. came, with all his court, to feed his little finny friends, — an amusement the feeble old king was childishly fond of, — while Madame de Maintenon sat in her sedan-chair surrounded by her lovely maids of honor, all forgetting for a moment court intrigue and scandal to take a part in this innocent pleasure.

Then there were days when all the world came to listen to the music of the Emperor's band, for the court was then at Fontainebleau, and the lovely Eugénie often walked among her people, leaning on the arm of the Emperor or a count cavalier, looking like a queen in a fairy tale, bowing and smiling to all, and received with enthusiasm wherever she went, — for she was then in the first flush of her power and beauty, and the *bourgeois* worshipped her.

To Constance it was a scene of bewildering enchantment, and she often felt that if she should close her eyes it would all vanish, and she would open them to find herself sitting quietly with her book under a shady tree in the garden at Helmsford. There on the left was the vast irregular pile of architecture, half Gothic, half Norman, the historical palace of Fontainebleau; behind, the grand forest, world renowned, stretching away in long sunny vistas and rock-crowned summits for more than fifty miles; before her, the gardens and park, the sunlit lawns, the trees cut in strange, fantastic shapes, the statues, fountains, and flowers, the miniature lakes with their painted miniature boats, the elegant crowd of courtiers passing to and fro, the lovely Empress followed by her brilliant suite, the strains of exquisite music from a hundred instruments quivering and trembling on the perfumed air, mingled with the cool, fresh splash of the fountains, and the blue sky and summer sun shining over all.

On other days they wandered through the grand and magnificent apartments of the palace, each rich with historical and traditional interest, they studied the rare pictures that adorned the walls, they listened to Mr. Carnegie's interesting sketches of each century. Here was the room in which the sad and disappointed Napoleon signed his abdication; where the unfortunate Josephine bade adieu forever to earthly happiness; where Louis XIV. and Madame de Maintenon played out their drama of love; where Marie Antoinette enjoyed for a little time the fatal power of royalty, youth, and beauty; where Christina, Queen of Sweden, unmercifully put to death her chamberlain, whom she had loved with the mad passion of her strange nature, but who had deceived and betrayed her, — a crime the proud, cruel woman could only blot out with blood. Each room, each spot, has its own tragic history, over which Constance lingered and dreamed, and wondered what were the thoughts and feelings of the actors.

Often they rode and walked under the grand trees of the forest, penetrating into the depths of the shadowy recesses, plucking the shrinking blue mimosa and the delicate ferns and harebells, scaring from their haunts the wild rabbit and partridge or the shy, graceful deer. Mrs. Tremaine was always straying away from the others, and losing herself, causing Mr. Carnegie no end of trouble and distress. When, after much running about and shouting, he would come upon her quietly seated in some shady nook, weaving with graceful fingers wreaths of ivy, ferns, and holly. she would break into a mocking laugh at his pale face and anxious manner; then, seeing him look really distressed, she would throw the garland around his neck, and, holding it by the ends, lead him off like a captive Bacchus.

One morning Constance, Mrs. Tremaine, and Mr. Carnegie were riding slowly under the interlaced branches of some huge elms that formed an almost impenetrable shade, only broken here and there by slender rays of sunlight that shot like arrows through the thick foliage. Mrs. Tremaine was mounted on a superb white horse; her dark green habit displayed the beauty of her figure, the white plumes of her hat mingled with the golden curls that had escaped from their fastenings, her cheeks were slightly flushed, her eyes soft and dreamy. Constance rode quietly by her side. Her pale face, dark hair, black hat and feathers, and the severe simplicity of her mourning habit, formed a striking but no less beautiful contrast. Suddenly there was a crash among the underwood, the shrubbery parted, and a magnificent deer, with his antlers laid back, his nostrils distended and white with foam, his eyes starting from their sockets, and every muscle quivering with fear, sprang across the road with one bound and disappeared on the other side.

"The hunt! the royal hunt!" cried Mr. Carnegie. As he spoke, a turn in the road showed them all the gay cavalcade tearing madly along with their dogs, in full pursuit after the poor trembling animal who was straining every limb to escape. First came the Empress, her golden hair and white feathers flying in the wind, her scarlet and white costume, jewel-handled whip, and gayly caparisoned, full-blooded hunter, with not a spot or fleck of foam on his glossy hide. Next came the Emperor, a most commanding figure in the saddle; then the gay courtiers, with a flutter of feathers, a flashing of jewels, loud, gay laughter, mingled with the snorting of the horses, the clattering of their hoofs, and the panting of the dogs as they flew by like the wind. More than one head was turned for another glance, and even the Emperor bowed low in his saddle to the vision of quiet beauty that met his admiring gaze. In a moment they were out of sight, and Constance sighed as she said, "I hope they will not bring down the poor thing. It is strange how all these people can find pleasure in hunting a helpless, timid animal to death."

"O, how tame you are!" cried Mrs. Tremaine, her cheeks aglow, and her eyes bright with excitement. "I only wish I might ride with them."

"Your view is right, Miss Wilbreham," said Mr. Carnegie; "it is indeed a cruel pastime, though all the world share it."

"Nevertheless, it was a brilliant scene," returned Helen. "Let us make a short cut across this narrow bridle-path, and perhaps we may meet them again."

That evening they sat around the little table in the beautiful garden of the hotel, eating their ices, discussing the adventure of the morning, and expressing their regrets that they must return to Paris the next day.

"Dear Madame de Marc, stay another week," cried Helen.

"No, it is impossible, my dear; I cannot neglect my duties any longer," replied Madame, decidedly. So the next morning they went back to Paris.

CHAPTER XII.

TOMBS AND PICTURES.

"HERE is an affecting termination to true love," said Mrs. Tremaine, turning to Mr. Carnegie, as they stood one day by the tomb of Abélard and Héloise, at Père la Chaise, "a sad monument; two disappointed hearts united only in death."

"But they were happy for a time," replied Mr. Carnegie; "they had their foretaste of paradise in the retreat they had chosen, before old Fulbert separated them. I often think of the lonely Héloise pining in her convent cell, dreaming forever of her dark-eyed Abélard, her poet, her singer, her reality of all that is noble and beautiful in humanity; and the poor, sad, heart-broken Abélard, pacing the long, dim corridors of St. Gildas, gnawing his very heart in the bitterness of his sorrow, or pouring out wild lamentations to the unheeding waves, as he walked for hours on the rugged shore, mad with thinking of his lost Héloise and his ruined life, or shedding scalding tears over the memory of the sweet but brief days of their happy love, which he knew were lost to him forever; again, sitting in his abbé's dress, stern and gray, before the rude harp in his cell, pouring out the pent-up passion of his life in a wild sweet song of longing love and regret."

"And this is all," said Constance, — "all that remains of one of the saddest tragedies of the human heart. Two stone figures placidly sleeping side by side, — one in the dress of a nun, the other in that of a monk, stony crosses clasped to their stony breasts, and stony eyes looking calmly and patiently toward the blue heavens! 'After life's fitful fever, they sleep well!'"

"Do you know," inquired Mrs. Tremaine, "that this is the shrine of all unhappy lovers; they have hung these withered garlands on the tomb. They wet the unsympathizing stone with their tears, and pray to the spirits of the united lovers, now happy in paradise, believing they will intercede with the mother of God to pity them in their sorrows. They bring an offering of fresh flowers, clasp their hands above the cross, make a solemn vow of fidelity, which they seal with a kiss, and then go away, believing all will be well."

Mr. Carnegie turned an eloquent glance upon her as she spoke, and, leaning his forehead against the tomb, remained silent for a moment. Was he praying, or was he thinking? I do not know, I cannot declare, for his placid face revealed nothing as he turned away from the spot.

They paused for a moment to regard the place where rest the remains of Marshal Ney, Napoleon's brave, noble, and beloved general. It is a simple enclosure around a mound of grass and a few mournful neglected flowers. No storied marble tells of the great and heroic acts of a life devoted to its country.

"*N'importe;* the solitary sadness of the place is more eloquent than the proudest monument," said Mr. Carnegie, as he plucked a few leaves for his herbarium.

Near the simple but massive tomb of the Rothschild family, in the Jews' cemetery, is the tomb of Rachel, — a plain granite pile, about the size and form of an English dog-kennel. Mrs. Tremaine lingered near it in deep thought. "How strange," she said at length, "that so frail a body should imprison genius which could magnetize and electrify the multitude until they forgot that the part she was playing was not reality! And stranger still that a form so classically beautiful, a face so lofty and pure, could conceal a character so at variance with her intellect and appearance."

"I remember," remarked Mr. Carnegie, "seeing her in *Medea* many years ago, and her agonized expression, her passionate utterance, are as vividly before me as though it were but yesterday. It is not difficult to understand how a soul all restlessness and fire should find these frail barriers of clay insufficient to retain it. She poured out her life and vitality to the adoring world with heedless prodigality. Her years were few, but she lived months in each day, and ages in each year. At one time she had the world at her feet, and now what remains? A handful of dust, a neglected tomb, a reputation unmercifully handled by her biographers. These are all save the fame of her genius; that was a spark of immortality which nothing could extinguish."

"Let us go," said Mrs. Tremaine. "It is late, and the surroundings are rather gloomy. I think an English country churchyard much to be preferred for a burial-place. Père la Chaise is vast, grand, and solemn, a silent city of the dead. It speaks only of decay, never of resurrection."

One bright day in August they wandered through the magnificent park of Versailles, down long avenues of stately elms, festooned with ivy and climbing roses, over lawns green and smooth as velvet, by babbling rustic brooks, sparkling fountains, and shady arbors, until they reached the charming Trianon of Marie Antoinette, the Swiss cottages, the little gardens, the tiny ponds, rustic bridges, and vine-covered bowers, all as they were arranged nearly a century ago for the pleasure of that young and lovely queen, whose will was law, whose smile was more potent than the frown of a nation. They walked through the pretty simple rooms where she had played her *rôle* of peasant, when she served with her own fair hands the adoring courtiers who gathered around her, loving her better that she could descend from her royalty to seek happiness in a simple pastoral scene.

"Do you think it possible she has slept in this bed?" exclaimed Mrs. Tremaine, pausing to examine a simple couch overhung with muslin drapery; "and are these pretty pastoral scenes the same pictures that first met her gaze when she awoke in the morning?"

"Certainly, the very same," replied Con-

stance, "or at least I love to think so, it brings one so much nearer the life of the woman."

"I dislike to leave a place of such calm and simple beauty for the magnificence of the palace," said Madame Landel. "Poor queen! how her heart must have ached when she looked upon it all for the last time!"

"I think the saddest of all the remains of departed glory, life, and joy is this theatre," observed Mr. Carnegie as they followed the guide to the deserted shrine of Melpomene and Thalia. "Here is the large and beautifully arranged stage, where the queen, cavaliers, and ladies of the court played their mimic parts, which were but rehearsals for the last fearful tragedy that ended the lives of the greater part of the gay throng. Dust and mould have gathered and obscured the brilliancy of the exquisitely painted scenes. Spiders spin their webs among the drops and gilded curtains year after year undisturbed. Solemn, unearthly echoes resound where once mirth, laughter, and joy held their wild revel."

"I can fancy," said Mrs. Tremaine, as she turned to the richly decorated royal box, "the whole enchanting scene, — the beauty, the youth, the rustling silks, dancing plumes, and sparkling jewels, the bright eyes, the snowy bosoms, the glowing cheeks, that were so soon faded and darkened by despair and death. I can see Louis XVI., his placid, benevolent face beaming with pleasure and expectation, surrounded by his ministers, all looking eagerly for the curtain to rise, when their queen would appear as first lady in some light French comedy. Those were merry days for the court of France, — careless days of mirth and pleasure, followed by a reign of despair and terror."

They left the theatre to its silence, dust, and darkness, and went through suites of rooms, and magnificent state apartments, all furnished royally; they lingered to look on the rare pictures, — a gallery in themselves, — the statues, old china, tapestry glowing with colors as fresh and vivid as when it left the loom, and the curious clock, on which, when the hour strikes, a door flies open and a number of little figures in the costume of the time dance a minuet. In the private rooms of Marie Antoinette they found much to interest them, — her library, her writing-table, and chair; they looked with something like reverence at the books she had read and studied, still bearing the marks placed by her fingers.

When they reached the private boudoir lined with mirrors, Mrs. Tremaine exclaimed, "Ah! I can well understand why Marie Antoinette clasped her throat with her hands when she entered this room for the first time. Look, I have no head."

They all started in astonishment at the singular appearance Mrs. Tremaine presented, *sans tête*. Owing to some arrangement of the plates of glass, in certain positions the body seems to stand without a head.

"Certainly the poor queen's after fate seems to warrant in a measure the verity of the tradition," said Mr. Carnegie. "Though we have no reason at present to think Mrs. Tremaine will be beheaded, yet, if the tradition is true, no one ever finds himself accidentally in that position without coming sooner or later to the *guillotine*."

"How horrible!" said Helen, turning away with a shudder; "but I suppose the poor queen believed in it then as little as I do now."

From the boudoir they passed into the private cabinet, the door of which the brave Swiss guards defended while the unfortunate queen made her escape down the secret stairs. A little room less than ten feet square, what a scene of carnage it must have presented! Twelve brave soldiers cut down by the infuriated mob!

"How they must have loved their queen," remarked Constance, "when they so willingly gave their lives for her!"

They looked from the balcony, where she had courageously held up the Prince Imperial to the blood-thirsty mob, entreating them, with all the strong love and tenderness of a mother's heart, to spare and protect her child.

"Poor mother!" said Madame Landel, with tears in her eyes, "in her natural affection she forgot her royalty, and would have knelt at the feet of the lowest fishwoman in the crowd to have saved those she loved."

"Now," said Mr. Carnegie, looking at his watch, "let us go into the garden to see the world-renowned fountain, which precisely at four o'clock sends up its sparkling waters from five hundred jets."

Scarcely had they reached their seats under some overhanging branches, when here and there from the immense semicircle started up tiny streams, that increased in size and height until they seemed to reach almost to the heavens, — dazzling, sparkling, many-colored rays, rainbow-tinted, slanting sunbeams, overshot with trembling, changing mist. It was more like some scene conjured up by the magic of an enchanter than the cunning device of man. For a few moments only this wonderful effect lasted; even while their eyes were fixed on it, it disappeared, and nothing remained but the dull gray stone of the fountain.

"How beautiful, but how brief!" said Constance, with a sigh; "it is an emblem of joy, entrancing but evanescent, faded and

gone even while we are exulting over its possession!"

Poor girl! while she spoke the memory of the rose-tinted hours of her life started up suddenly from the still fountain of the past, glorified and irradiated her clouded sky, and then vanished, leaving nothing but the hard, cold reality, the dull grayness of the stone she had rolled over the grave of her love.

They all left this spot, so replete with beauty and historic interest, sadder, if not wiser, and little was said by any of the party during the drive home; each one seemed absorbed in thought, or perhaps they were all too tired for conversation.

They spent many days in the gallery of the Louvre; there, with the aid of Mr. Carnegie's knowledge and taste, they studied the exquisite productions of the greatest masters.

Constance lingered longer, and examined with a more profound interest those pure but half-conceived aspirations of Cimabue and Giotto. She often fancied the shepherd-boy neglecting his sheep to gaze with dreamy eyes over the distant Pisan hills, or with more intense earnestness into the blue ether, perhaps tracing in the varying and tender tints the pale, sweet face of a saint or suffering martyr. Poor pained aspirations, half wrought, but powerful with the stamp of genius and soul, with all their faults of execution they attained to what the later masters sought and toiled for in vain. The suffering heart of the girl found companionship and sympathy in the tearful, patient faces that looked at her from the old canvases, made sacred by the golden glow of Time. Crude, almost grotesque, yet how powerful in their appeal to the purest and holiest in our natures.

"Here is a picture I want you to look at carefully," said Mr. Carnegie, — "St. Francis of Assisi in ecstasy. It was painted by Filippo Lauri. The story is that St. Francis, being ill, thought music might relieve his sufferings, but being too humble to grant himself the pleasure, God rewarded his virtue by sending a choir of angels to sing to him. See, the poor saint, worn out by watching and fasting, has fallen asleep on a rock, holding a cross to his breast. What a seraphic vision he beholds! what enchanting sounds burst upon his ears! His whole body expresses the lassitude of profound repose; the ineffable peace and joy depicted on his face show that angels are ministering to him. To me it is a wonderful picture. I am never weary of looking at it.

"Here is a portrait that pleases me more than all your saints," said Mrs. Tremaine, — "this picture of an ancient coquette, the Mona Lisa of Leonardo da Vinci; she is not lovely, and yet she is conscious of her power, and sits there as proudly as though she were born to command the world. She has a very ugly nose, and no eyebrows, and yet her face fascinates; perhaps it is the expression of her wicked eyes."

"No," replied Mr. Carnegie, laughing, "it is the power of coquetry; every line of her face, the languishing eyes, the seducing mouth, the imperious smile, all show she was a heartless flirt."

"I don't like the picture," said Constance, turning away; "here is one I prefer, this beautiful Conception of Murillo. The Virgin seems to float in the clouds; and can anything be more exquisitely lovely than the rapt, holy expression of her face, or the innocent sweetness of the angels and cherubs surrounding her?"

"You have selected for your especial approval the finest picture in the collection, or perhaps I should say the one which cost the most money," observed Mr. Carnegie; "it was bought in 1852 at the sale of the collection of the Duke of Dalmatia for the sum of 515,300 francs. Is not that a proof of its merit?"

"Not entirely," replied Constance. "The Mona Lisa cost almost as much, beside causing no end of trouble between the Italian and French governments, and I do not think the pictures at all to be compared in regard to merit or beauty."

"Ah, Constance!" laughed Mrs. Tremaine, "you look at the portrait of the unfortunate *La Jaconde* with the eyes of a virtuous woman, and you are prejudiced against her picture because of her life. Is it not so? But I have no such scruples. I think it the most remarkable thing in the Louvre."

Each day brought with it some new amusement and distraction, and Madame Landel rejoiced secretly at the happy change in her beloved charge. Gradually the smile returned to her lips, and chased away the sad, unquiet expression that had too often rested there; the indifference she had shown to life had given place to a cheerful and hopeful interest in everything connected with her future.

The summer was passing away rapidly; August was nearly over. The heat had been very oppressive, and one day, late in the afternoon, they had all gathered in the garden. The ladies, in loose white dresses, reclined languidly on the low rustic seats, fanning themselves to produce the faintest breath of air. Mr. Carnegie lay stretched at full length on the grass, reading to them from Lamartine's *Fior d' Aliza*. He read well and with much expression the exquisitely beautiful introductory remarks of the author. When he had finished he remained

a few moments in deep thought, and then said, "Why is it that the most simple thing Lamartine has written is a poem in itself?"

"Because he writes from his own experience," replied Constance; "all he portrays he has felt and suffered, and he has written a series of dramas, in every one of which he has been the principal actor. No one can so well describe to us stage-life as he who has seen it in its different phases, — as he who has appeared for an hour before an admiring audience, flushed with success and bewildered with music and light. Then he turns behind the scenes; the lamps are extinguished, the throbbing pulse of melody is still, the applause of the crowd no longer sounds in his ears, he sees the gorgeous transformations are nothing but painted boards and paper in fact, reality is before him in all its dreary ghastliness, and he wonders how, for even one moment, he could have been dazzled by the illusion. At times Lamartine forgets, for a little, the pathos and sadness of life; his mournful experiences fade away and are clothed in the softening drapery of time, and the murmuring voices of his dreamy youth are deadened by the strife of the world. Its pride, ambition, and pomp lure him from the past, offering him in exchange less of sweetness and purity, more of fame and glory. Suddenly he remembers he has lived and suffered; then he dips his pen deep into the fountains of his heart, and writes a poem overbrimming with the pathos and tender majesty of a life-long sorrow."

"You are an ardent admirer of Lamartine," said Mr. Carnegie; "am glad I have selected this work from all his others to read this afternoon. There is such a rustic sweetness and simplicity about it, so appropriate to the time and scene."

Constance did not reply; she was thinking of the words he had read, and how applicable they were to her own experience.

An hour after, when she was sitting alone with Madame Landel, she said, "Is it not strange how a little time changes our whole lives, and even our feelings? I seem to have lived more in this last year than in all my life before. I wonder if this discipline has improved and strengthened my character. I hope dear papa, from his home above, looks with approval on my efforts to be patient and resigned. I have done very little good to any one, only I have tried not to make those around me unhappy. Do you think I have entirely failed?" she inquired, with a little touch of anxiety in her voice.

"No, my dear," replied her friend; "you have at least made me happier by trying to be cheerful, and I know, if your papa is permitted to watch over you, he will rejoice that you are renewing your interest in life, and trying so sweetly and patiently to learn the hard lesson of submission. Believe me, in time you will be happy. You are young; your life is all before you. What can prevent you, if you do your duty to yourself and your fellow-creatures, from finding your reward in a calm and peaceful future?"

"I know," she said, "my life has still many blessings; but yet there are times when such a sense of utter bereavement fills my heart that I cannot support it unmurmuringly. I will endeavor to be what dear papa would wish; I will try to live for something beside myself. I see now more clearly into the ills of life. The sorrows of the heart are like well-read books to me; I have learned their characters, and I know them, no matter how well concealed, for I look far below the surface, and I see the poor soul tempted, struggling, suffering, and I long to do something to aid it, that it may gain the victory."

CHAPTER XIII.

IN SEARCH OF HAPPINESS.

ONE morning Constance entered Madame Landel's room with an open letter in her hand.

"I have just received this from Lady Dinsmore," she said, — "such a long, kind letter; and I am so glad she has decided to spend the winter in Italy, or at least a portion of it. Hear what she says: —

"'Do not wait in Paris for us, as my duties will detain me in England until the commencement of the winter. Go on to your destination, — Florence, Rome, or Naples, whichever it may be, — and we will join you there. There are many reasons why I should not leave England, but a longing desire to see again the land of art and song, and the benefit it may be to my child, induce me to do so.'

"I had hoped," continued Constance, "that she would join us here, but as she cannot leave England at present, I have decided, if it meets with your approval, to go directly to Rome, where I wish to spend the winter. I think Mrs. Tremaine will accompany us; she told me yesterday she had about decided to do so; and you know Mr. Carnegie spends all his winters in Rome; so we shall be a very pleasant party. Does this arrangement suit you, dear Madame?"

"Yes, my child, perfectly. How soon do you intend to leave?"

"I think, if Mrs. Tremaine is ready, we must start by the first of October, and it is now the middle of September; so it will be in a fortnight."

"Very well, my dear, you must finish

your sight-seeing with Mrs. Tremaine, and I will remain quietly at home. I have seen all the places of interest years ago, and nothing is new to me in Paris. Then there is a little shopping to be done, which I will attend to; so you will have your time entirely free until we leave."

"Do always just as you think best, dear Madame," replied Constance, kissing her fondly as she left the room to find Mrs. Tremaine.

Mr. Carnegie was delighted with the decision. He was anxious to get back to Rome, which he declared was paradise compared with any other place. Madame de Marc, at first, could scarcely be brought to consent to Mrs. Tremaine's leaving her.

"You are my child," she said, "and I cannot get on without you. It is cruel to abandon me for new friends."

Helen kissed her, wept over her, and petted her, declaring nothing would induce her to go, only her health required it.

"It is absolutely necessary that I should spend the winter in Italy. You remember last year how I suffered from this dreadful climate. I am sure if I remain another twelve months here, at the end of the time I shall be a fit subject for Père la Chaise."

Madame de Marc looked at her smiling, rosy face, and did not seem at all convinced by her reasoning; however, after much protesting and debating, she finally acquiesced sadly and reluctantly. After she had done so, she felt as though a shadow of coming evil had fallen upon her.

Every hour of the succeeding days was employed in visiting the remaining places of interest, shopping, and keeping appointments with milliners and dressmakers, until Mr. Carnegie declared they intended opening a *modiste's* establishment in Rome.

"I have bought very little," Constance would say. "It is Mrs. Tremaine to whom all these belong. I have no need of fine things, as I shall not go into society because of my mourning."

The evenings were too chilly and the days too short to allow them to spend much time in the garden; now they all assembled in the *salon* instead, where they sipped their tea and chatted before the fire, or listened to Helen's sweet voice.

"Do sing for us, Miss Wilbreham," said Madame de Marc, "just one song before you leave. I have never even heard your voice."

Much to the surprise of Madame Landel, she seated herself at the piano, and commenced in a sweet but tremulous voice *La Partenza* of Schubert; but before she had finished she burst into tears and left the room. It was the first time she had sung since her father's death, but she never refused afterwards. Indeed, she seemed to find a relief in pouring out the sorrows of her heart in pathetic music.

At last all was arranged, and the morning came for their departure. The ladies bade Madame de Marc adieu with tearful eyes. Mrs. Tremaine burst into sobs, and, with real sorrow at leaving her friend, protested at the last moment she would not go. Madame de Marc gently soothed the weeping girl, with a strange agony at her own heart, a feeling of coming calamity, that the circumstance little warranted.

The luggage was arranged, the last farewells were said, and Mr. Carnegie, flushed and tired from his unusual exertion, gave the coachman the order to start.

Constance and Mrs. Tremaine leaned from the window, bowing, smiling, and wiping away the tears, until the carriage turned and they caught the last glimpse of Madame de Marc standing in the court surrounded by her servants. Then Helen threw herself back on the seat, and cried, with a choking sob, "I cannot tell why, but I feel I shall never see her again."

The day proved to be rainy and foggy, and they were very glad to remain at Lyons over night. They found little to interest them in this Manchester of France, and the next morning they continued their journey.

It was a delightful day, fresh and clear after the rain. The blue Rhone flashed and quivered in the sunlight, and far away on the distant mountains, whose summits were still capped with fleecy clouds, nestled smiling vineyards, yellow villages with bright-tiled roofs, spires, turrets, and ruined towers, one succession of pictures, — stately Avignon, once the stronghold of the Papal power, now showing decay amid the grandeur of its castellated summits and ruined palaces; Valence, where the weary lace-makers toil all day over the dainty web, to adorn idle beauty in far-away countries. On they sped with lightning-like velocity, past ancient cities, beautiful villages, fair plains, and flashing rivers, until suddenly the blue Mediterranean burst on their sight, studded with islands and dotted with white-sailed boats.

The heart of Constance beat with sudden joy at the lovely scene spread before her. "At last, at last," she thought, "I am drawing near classic ground; I behold the sea whose waves touch the land of art, music, poetry, tradition, and romance."

Her musing was interrupted by their arrival at Marseilles, the oldest city in France, founded six hundred years before Christ. Travellers seldom find much to interest them in Marseilles, but to our party, who were prepared to see beauty in everything, it seemed a most charming place.

They drove through the magnificent

Rue Noailles to the Château Barelly, and there a scene of surpassing beauty spread before them.

In front was the old gray château, rich in pointed turrets, porticos, and quaint carving, surrounded by grounds laid out in the most elaborate designs; long drives made dark and sombre by interlacing branches, festooned with ivy, graceful vines, and climbing roses, beds of gorgeous tropical flowers, among which flamed the oleander and blood-red cactus, fountains flashing in the sunlight, statues gleaming among the trees; lakes and cascades, rustic bridges, Gothic temples, brilliant pagodas, and half-concealed towers; in fact, everything in nature and art to render the scene as near paradise as the devices of man can fashion earth. Away in the background rose the mountains, purple against the blue sky, with little white villages nestling in all their gorges, and dotted over with patches of emerald green and gold, as the sun painted a field of grain, or a yellow vineyard; and away to the right sparkled and flashed the wide, free Mediterranean. Whatever has been said or sung in praise of the blueness of its waves has not been exaggerated; there is something truly indescribable in the depth and tenderness of the color, a warmth, a limpidness, that partakes of the tone of the sky smiling above it. They drove along a beautiful road, built around the head of a deep bay. On one side is the sea, covered with majestic ships under full canvas, steamers leaving far behind a trail of smoke, like touches of dusky bronze against the clear sky, and little dancing white-sailed boats, some bearing gay streamers and prows painted in as many colors as a bouquet of flowers; on the other side are high perpendicular cliffs of yellow clay, brilliant with wild cactus and oleander, and crowned on the summit with gay villas and overhanging gardens. A little distance from the shore, and making a grim, dark blot on the sunny sea, is the castellated rock known as Château d' If, the scene of the romance of Monte Cristo. At the right of that a ledge of gray limestone extends far into the sea, and at its base on sunken rocks rise two small lighthouses, so small and so far below that they look like painted toys; and perched so high above, on a perpendicular cliff, that the turrets seem to touch the sky, is the Church of Notre Dame de la Garde, and at its base the whole great city, watched over by this sacred edifice.

"O, what a scene of beauty!" said Constance, "and how refreshing after the din and bustle of Paris!"

"Look there, below," cried Mrs. Tremaine, whose eyes were fixed on the beach, where a number of people were gathered. "Do you see that woman sitting on a rock, with her face buried in her hands? Poor thing! what can be the matter?"

"Let us go down and inquire," said Mr. Carnegie, "or, if you prefer, remain here, and I will go alone."

"No, let us all go," said Constance; "if she is suffering we may be able to help her."

As they drew near the spot they saw before them a forlorn-looking girl, poorly dressed, crouched on the shore, her face buried in her hands, and her straight black hair unfastened and trailing in the sand, while near her stood an infirm old man, regarding her with the most profound sorrow.

"What is the matter with her?" inquired Mr. Carnegie, as the old man took off his red cap.

"*Ah mon Dieu! Ma pauvre Marie!*" he replied, in the trembling tones of age. "A happier, gayer child than she was you never saw. Two weeks ago to-day she was married to Pierre, the handsomest lad on the coast. A few days after he went out to fish, a squall struck the boat within hailing distance of the shore; she went down before our eyes, and that night his poor body was washed ashore, here in this very spot, dead." At the sound of the word "dead," the girl raised a haggard face, lighted up with a pair of wild black eyes, and repeated slowly, "Dead, yes, dead," and then sank back into her former position.

"We cannot keep her away from this spot; she will come here to stay day and night. *O mon Dieu! Ma pauvre fille!*"

"Poor thing," said Constance, laying her hand tenderly on her head, "how terrible! You must take her away directly from this place; she will be better for a change"; and, opening her purse, she poured its contents into the hand of the astonished old man, who had never seen so much gold before.

"*Dieu vous bénisse, Mademoiselle!* I will do so, and it may save my child."

"I do not know which to pity the most, the girl or the poor old man," said Helen, as they turned away. "Who would have expected to witness such a scene of sorrow here, where all seems so gay and cheerful?"

"It is a sad ending to our drive," remarked Madame Landel; "but it serves to teach us the uncertainty of life and earthly happiness."

As they mounted the hill toward Notre Dame de la Garde, they met a merry wedding party descending. They were young and handsome, but brown and rough with sun, wind, and labor, dressed in their holiday finery, surrounded by their friends, their broad brown faces beaming with happiness and good-humor.

"Life looks very bright to them at this

moment, remarked Mr. Carnegie; "let us hope a more fortunate fate for the bride than that of the poor girl below."

"I have found out by sad experience that the Mediterranean can be rough and stormy as well as blue and calm," said Constance, as she crept to the deck, leaning on Mr. Carnegie's arm, after a bad night between Marseilles and Civita Vecchia. "Put me in a safe place near Mrs. Tremaine, and then please go down for Madame Landel; she is almost helpless from sea-sickness."

"O what a night, — thunder and lightning, wind and rain, and such a sea! I thought the ship would be lost," said Helen, piteously. "I never will go on the sea again. What could have induced us to come this way?"

"Never mind, dear, it is all over now," replied Constance, "and the sea is lovely this morning. See, we are passing between Elba and Corsica. How strange that these two islands should be, one the birthplace, and the other the prison, of Napoleon! I fancy the poor captive must have looked often with longing eyes toward the spot where he had passed the glad days of childhood, wishing he could forget all the cares and sorrows of his ambitious life, to be a free, happy child in his old home."

"I think it would have cured him of his ambition if he had been sea-sick a little," said Helen, languidly raising her head and glancing around. "I am sure I should be willing to be even a prisoner if I could only land at once."

The next morning all were on deck early, for Civita Vecchia was in sight, and they were as anxious to see the place of their destination as though they had been on the sea for weeks. All the passengers now came on deck, some for the first time during the voyage, and indeed they were a motley crew. There was a bishop surrounded by some twenty monks and priests; they were in the midst of a warm discussion, talking in several languages at the same time, and gesticulating freely. Among them were several Carmelite priests, — large, dark men, dressed in picturesque loose white robes with large sleeves and pointed hoods, and their heads shaved to a narrow ring of hair, — strong, handsome men, fit to do battle with the world, spoiled by these womanly robes and bald heads. The others in black looked like gloomy ravens; they talk, take snuff, and glance at their breviaries at the same moment, excited and eager for the first sight of the Eternal City. They come, pilgrims from far away, to worship at the great shrine, the centre of the Catholic world, St. Peter's.

Here is a group of nuns, — pale, meek, devout women robed in black, with heavy rosaries, their hands folded and their eyes downcast. They too are about to realize a long-anticipated joy. The remainder of the passengers are made up of different nations, — Italians, Greeks, Spaniards, Germans, and English, coming from different lands, each to worship in his own way at the same shrine.

The sea is as blue and calm as though no tempest had ever ruffled its placid surface, and the long low line of Tuscan shore lies bright and beautiful in the morning sunlight, — Civita Vecchia, aged, quaint, and dreary, perched in sombre gravity on the edge of the blue sea. A little bustle of importance is imparted by a frigate and a garrison, otherwise the most important seaport in the papal dominions would be as deserted and silent as ruined Pompeii.

Mrs. Tremaine and Constance amused themselves by giving sous to the beggars, while Mr. Carnegie went through the annoyance of opening trunks and boxes for the custom-house inspectors.

At last all is arranged, and they are seated in the quaint, rattling carriage, drawn by two scrubby horses, ornamented with plumes and jangling bells; the postilion cracks his whip, gives an unearthly yell, and away they go, followed by the shouts of beggars and the barking of dogs.

They stopped a few moments at Palo to change horses.

"What a dreary, romantic place!" cried Mrs. Tremaine.

And indeed it was, — a perfectly level stretch of marshy ground; a castle by the sea; a few cottages scattered here and there; herds of horses and sheep tended by their respective shepherds, who now and then droned out a wild, plaintive wail on their pipes, which was taken up by one and another, and repeated far away, until it died into distance and silence; a white mist, rising spectre-like over the land, and the sad twilight brooding over all.

Near the little *osteria* was an immense cactus, said to be over a hundred years old; it was fifteen feet high, and the leaves were ten or twelve inches thick, and were completely covered with names and dates cut into the surface.

"What a strange record!" said Mr. Carnegie, laughing, — "a unique way to register one's same. However, it is likely to be more lasting than simple paper and ink; and I see many autographs the writers of which have been famous for the last fifty years. But, poor old book, you must soon close up, for your leaves are all full." However, he found a little place on a sprouting leaf, and added his initials, which he said would grow and increase in size long after he was dust and ashes.

So they went on their way, leaving Palo by the sea to mist and darkness. A few

hours afterward they entered the gloomy Porta Cavallegieri, and suddenly came under the colonnades and into the square of St. Peter's. The vast pile, outlined against the blue-black sky, seemed more immense and impressive than when seen under the full light of day.

"Now," they all exclaimed, simultaneously, "we know we are in Rome!"

CHAPTER XIV.

SANTO SPIRITO.

"The poet in a golden clime was born,
With golden stars above,
Dowered with the hate of hate, the scorn of scorn,
The love of love."

IN the autumn of 1834, some twenty-five years before the opening of our story, the nuns of the foundling hospital of Santo Spirito at Rome were gathered in the refectory taking their comfortable supper.

"What a hard day this has been!" said Sister Agatha, the sweet-looking nun who sat always in the *camera della rota*. "Thirty-five little innocents, and none of them over a day old!"

"Are all the wards full?" inquired the Superior, a benevolent nun of forty years or more.

"All are full," replied Sister Seraphina, the guardian of the wards; "not a place for another, unless a little one who came Sunday drops off to-night, and I think he will before another hour. Six to-day! It is really a pretty sight to see them all lying in the chapel side by side like so many little marble figures, sweet innocents!" Sister Seraphina was interrupted by the sudden and imperative sound of a bell. Sister Agatha, starting up, exclaimed, "*Madonna mia!* there is the bell again. Thirty-six times it has rung to-day, and not a place for another child." And, taking a small lamp, she hastened to the *camera della rota*, followed by Sister Seraphina.

The wheel turned, and there, in the little velvet-lined basket with the golden emblem of the Santo Spirito on the canopy, lay a child of a few days old, so lovely that Sister Agatha, in all the hundreds she had transferred from the *rota* to the ward basket, had never seen one so beautiful.

"*Angelo mio!*" she exclaimed, bending over it, entranced. "What eyes, and such soft little curls! and how fair and white! Does any one wish to speak?" she inquired at the grating. "They have gone," she said, "and in a hurry," as no answer came. "How could any one abandon such an angel as this But let us examine him to see if there is any mark or name by which he may be known."

"Nothing, I declare, said Sister Seraphina; "but see how fine his linen is, and what rich lace! This is no common baby. We must keep watch over the child; there is some mystery connected with him. But what shall we name him? I am sure I can think of nothing."

"To-day is San Clemente; but we can't name them all after the same saint, — thirty-six Clementes in one day is too many."

While they were talking the child lay quite still in the lap of Sister Agatha, looking in her face with large, solemn brown eyes. Suddenly he broke into a little pitiful wail; the nun pressed him to her heart and soothed him gently. "I have decided," she said, after a few moments' thought, and her eyes were filled with tears as she spoke. "I will name him for my only brother, who died a few weeks ago; yes, I will name him Guido, — Guido Bernardo." So she opened the book and registered it, — No. 36, October 23, — and stamped it with the seal of the Holy Spirit.

"Now," she said, "tell Padre Filippo there is another to baptize, and we will take him to the chapel."

They found a priest waiting, — a dull, fat man in a dirty surplice, and rather cross because he had been interrupted in the midst of his supper. When he saw the child he muttered, "Another!" and crossed himself as if he feared contamination from the innocent who smiled in his face. He took the oil from the altar-boy and rubbed it behind the ears, and crammed his great finger covered with salt into the dear little mouth, at which the child wailed piteously. He then sprinkled it freely with water, mumbled over the name Sister Agatha had given him, made the sign of the cross on its forehead and breast, and then went away to finish his supper, feeling that he had added one more lamb to the fold of Christ.

As they turned to leave the chapel they were met at the door by one of the nurses, who carried a little cold, stark figure; it was the baby who was brought on Sunday, and had died just in time to leave its bed to the new-comer. Sister Seraphina took it from the woman, and, turning to a sort of shelf before the altar covered with a white sheet, she laid it down side by side with six other little marble figures, their pinched baby faces wearing a look of premature age pitiful to behold. They composed its tender limbs, and Sister Seraphina, bending over it, said, softly, "*Signor mio*, have mercy on this little soul, and may it be with Thee to-night in paradise! Seven more angels to sing before the Madonna. Thank God they are gone!" And sighing softly, she turned away and left the little sleepers before the altar, with the dim light from the swinging lamp falling over them. The next

morning they would be laid away in a cold, dark grave in the Campo Santo, with a little nameless white cross above the spot.

Sister Agatha selected the healthiest, sweetest-tempered nurse for her little charge, and did not leave him until she saw him sleeping in the most comfortable bed. She kissed him over and over, and drew the curtains together with a lingering fondness.

Many poor little abandoned children came, suffered a few days, and then died, or were taken away from the hospital to be nursed; the number of the arrivals did not decrease, neither did the number of deaths. Yet the little Guido grew and flourished, and every day added something to his infantine loveliness. Sister Agatha and Sister Seraphina tried which could exceed the other in attention and affection. And the nurse declared it was never a mortal baby, but a little angel sent from heaven to make them all better and more patient. "It smiles always, and yet there is something in its face that haunts me, and I can never forget it, even when I close my eyes in the night."

One day, about six weeks after the child had come, Sister Agatha sat alone in the *camera della rota*, engaged in arranging her books for the approaching examination of the directors. Some one tapped at the door. "*Entrate*," she said without looking up. When she raised her eyes a short, dark woman stood before her, — a rather plain, but honest face, with a large crimson mark on the left cheek. She was neatly and plainly dressed as a servant, in a shawl, with a white kerchief over her head; she looked sad, and her eyes were red with weeping.

"Well, Filomena, what can I do for you? Are you in trouble again? Have you lost another baby?"

"Ah, *Madonna mia!* I have lost my only one, my last baby, and he was so bright and healthy until a few hours before his death. It is the fourth, and I have no courage to bear it patiently. I dislike to put another baby to my breast, but I must; my milk will not dry up, so I have come for a nursling. Ah, *misera me!* it is the fourth time I have come."

"The wards are very full, and we are glad to send some of the children out. Come in and select one; but I suppose if you have another child you will bring it back."

"Yes," replied the woman. "I am too poor to keep a child long that is not mine."

They entered the ward, and Filomena passed from one bed to another, raising the curtains and looking with close scrutiny at each little sleeper, until she paused at the cot of Guido and exclaimed, "Here is one I will take; it is like the child I have lost!"

"No, no!" said Sister Agatha almost fiercely, "not that one; we can't spare him, he is our little pet. Take any other"; and she bent over the child as if to shield him from danger.

The little creature awoke and smiled in her face. "*Angelo mio*," she said, "they shall not take thee away"; and kissing it over and over she left the bed.

As she turned she saw the woman leaving the ward.

"What!" she exclaimed, "are you not going to take a child?"

"No," she replied, sullenly, "not unless I can have that; he is like my dear baby, and I could love him. I can't take another; beside, you said I could have my choice."

"It is true, Filomena, — it is true, you can have your choice. It is one of the laws of the institution to show no partiality, and I have no right to interfere between you and your choice," replied Sister Agatha with tears in her eyes. "But I love this little thing, and I can't bear to lose it. The Blessed Virgin is kind; she knows I am fixing my affections, that should all belong to her and her dear Son, on this child, and so she sends you to take him away to save me from further sin. To-night I will repeat forty times 'Hail Mary,' and the Mother of God will forgive me. Yes, Filomena, you may have the child, but be good to him."

She took the sweet baby in her arms, pressed her pale cheek against his rosy little face, kissed over and over the rings of his glossy hair, then, making the sign of the cross on his breast, she wrapped him in a warm, thick blanket and gave him to Filomena. "Bring him to me once a week, so that I may see that he is doing well," she said, in a husky voice.

The woman promised to do so, and went away with her precious burden.

Poor Sister Agatha walked slowly back to the *camera della rota* with a great vacancy in her heart; more than once she pressed her crucifix to her lips and murmured earnestly a *pater noster*. After that, the nurses noticed that she did not visit the wards as often as when the little Guido was there.

Every week Filomena brought the child to Sister Agatha, who found him more lovely and interesting each time. The poor nun's sad face lighted up with joy when she pressed him to her bosom, and if by chance his little caressing hand touched her thin cheek, a flush would rest there a moment and then die away, leaving her paler than before. She would put the child suddenly from her as though she had been guilty of some crime because she had listened to the yearning cries of her woman's heart.

One day, when he was a few months old, Filomena brought him back and gave him into the arms of Sister Agatha, saying, with choking sobs, that her husband would not allow her to keep him any longer, because she had procured a situation in an English family that required all her attention.

"I cannot bear to part with him an hour, I love him so, and he is so good and gentle. *Angelo mio, Guido mio,*" she said over and over, pressing passionate kisses on his little hands and face before she left him.

Sister Seraphina's rosy, good-natured face broke into radiant smiles when she saw the child brought back to the ward again; and Sister Agatha said more *pater nosters* than ever that night, but still there was a look of sweet contentment on her face that had not been there for some time.

From that hour the little Guido, in spite of the laws of the institution, became the pet of the whole sisterhood; even the Superior often had him for hours in her room, and when he commenced to walk, dozens of loving hands were stretched out to support his tottering steps and guard him from all danger, and the first utterance of those baby nothings, those meaningless little sounds, were often converted into words of profound wisdom. Other poor, ugly, pitiful little babies came and went, with scarcely proper attention, while this little beauty was pampered and petted as much as was ever the only heir to a noble house, and yet no one knew aught of his birth. Sister Agatha spent hours in dreaming of the probable future of this child, for she never doubted that he was of noble or even princely birth; and never did a grand carriage drive up to the hospital, and an elegant-looking lady or gentleman alight, to visit the institution, but her poor heart would throb with an agony of fear that his parents had come to claim him, or some rich, childless people would wish to adopt him. Her first impulse would be to hide him, then she would remember how sinful such thoughts were, and impose an extra penance on herself. But no one claimed him, neither did any one offer to adopt him. Perhaps the casual glance of the visitor did not detect the beauty in the child that the poor nuns saw when they, in their thoughts, likened him to the infant Jesus.

Every week Filomena came to see him, bringing with her toys and *bonbons*, to procure which she had often robbed herself of the very necessities of life. She always spoke of him with strange authority, saying that when matters went better with them she should take him again.

So time passed on, and Guido reached his eighth year, as beautiful and intelligent a child as ever was seen. He came and went, wandering at will through the wards and long corridors, prattling French with the French nuns and Italian with the Italians. Sister Agatha taught him to read, and the happiest hours of her life were when she held the child on her lap, and heard his sweet innocent lips murmur some little verse or prayer she had taught him. He was not a gay child; he seldom laughed aloud, and was never noisy at his play, but was always gentle and docile. It seemed as though some sorrow had marked him before his birth and still rested upon him.

The nun would often look into his face, with its broad intelligent forehead, around which clustered curls of soft brown hair, its straight aristocratic features and melancholy eyes, and wonder what talent was pent up in the little brain; for she never doubted that he would prove to be a great genius, and would one day astonish the world.

One afternoon he was in the garden alone, kneeling before the fountain and dabbling his little hands in the water that overran the basin. Sister Agatha watched him from the window, while he played in an abstracted sort of way unusual in children, moving his hands up and down in rhythmic motion, while his eyes were fixed dreamily on the blue sky.

"The little angel, what can he be thinking of? I dare say the blessed Madonna is speaking to him," she said, softly. "She will not leave such a cherub long to us poor sinners."

At that moment a bird alighted on the edge of the fountain, and, turning its head on one side, began to warble a clear, sweet song.

The child regarded it a moment, and then, without changing the motion of his hands, he commenced to imitate the notes; at first low and sweet, then clearer and louder, until his voice rose to the shrill soprano of the feathered songster.

Sister Agatha listened enchanted. "Ah," she said, "it is music he loves. I will teach him, and one day he will become a great *maestro.*"

That same evening when the setting sun was painting a golden aureole around the head of the Madonna over the altar in the little chapel, the nun took Guido by the hand and led him to the picture to say his *Ave Maria.* A sudden thought seemed to enter her mind, for she seated herself at the organ, which was rarely used, and played softly a few bars of one of Beethoven's symphonies, all the while watching the face of the child. A hundred varying expressions passed over it, and when she finished he said in a suppressed voice, "*Ancora.*" She repeated it several times, then, much to

her astonishment, his little fingers strayed over the keys, touching almost always the same notes she had played. From that night dated the commencement of his musical instruction. Sister Agatha devoted every spare moment to this new pleasure. It was astonishing how rapidly he learned to repeat everything he heard. Sometimes the Superior took him to the Church of Santo Spirito to hear vespers. He would go into the little chapel after his return and repeat correctly nearly all he had heard.

One day the Pope came to say high mass at Santo Spirito, and Guido sang with a choir of little boys. It was a scene he never forgot. The great church was hung with crimson and gold, and aglow with hundreds of lighted tapers; the pictures were all uncovered, and the high altar was adorned with flowers and with gold and silver candlesticks. When the Pope entered, followed by the long procession of cardinals, bishops, priests, and guards, the child's delight knew no bounds. When the music began, and the chorus of young voices joined, the little soul rose, pulsed, and throbbed with the first aspiration of genius, and overflowed in a strain of such pure and liquid soprano that every eye was turned to the orchestra, and all said that some little angel had descended among them, for never before were such heavenly strains heard on earth. When the mass was finished the Pope asked for the little singer, and Guido was brought, trembling with excitement, into the presence of his Holiness, who blessed him, and told him he must go to the College of San Michele to study, and in a few years he should become one of his choir and sing for him always.

The child went back to the hospital, his little heart bounding with joy; but when he told Sister Agatha she only pressed him to her bosom and burst into tears.

CHAPTER XV.

SAN MICHELE.

A FEW days after Guido sang before the Pope a cardinal's carriage drew up at the door of Santo Spirito, and a cardinal entered and asked for an interview with the Superior. After a little conversation Guido was sent for, and he was told to sing before his lordship. He instantly complied, filling the dingy little room with such a flood of melody that his listener was astonished, and exclaimed, "It is true, he has a wonderful voice, and he must begin to study at once in the College of San Michele. To-morrow I will send him a permission to enter, and will speak to the *maestro* to devote himself particularly to the cultivation of this exquisite talent." He patted the boy on the head, and looked into the soft brown eyes with inquiring interest, which at once won the child's confidence and love; and from that time he became the warm friend and patron of Guido.

The next day the boy bade a lingering adieu to Sister Agatha, the nuns, the wards, the garden, and the long corridors where his baby feet had trod, — the only home he had ever known. Filomena was there, holding by the hand a little dark-eyed girl of nine years, who was born a few months after she brought Guido back to the hospital. The children in their frequent but short interviews had become fast friends, always calling each other "brother" and "sister." The boy kissed her over and over, filled her little apron with his worn-out toys, and said, fondly, "*Addio, sorella mia.* When I have left the college I shall come to live always with you."

Sister Agatha led him reluctantly to the priest who was waiting to accompany him, gave him many last words of advice, and impressed upon him to come as often as once a week to see her.

He promised all she asked in a voice choked with sobs, kissed her with deep affection, that never changed or diminished in all his after life, and, taking the hand of the priest, the child went out from under the shadow of Santo Spirito to begin the life of the man.

When he had laid aside his little jacket, and put on the straight black frock, the mantle, and the broad-brimmed hat of the institution, he already looked some years older. Every one would have singled this child out from all the others as something superior. His delicate, spiritual face, his large, melancholy eyes, his soft, curling brown hair, his small hands and feet, and his graceful and dignified bearing, separated him from the vulgar herd. The very perfections that set him aside from the others also made him a butt for petty jealousy and envy, which are as apparent in children as in older persons. Then commenced for the poor boy a series of annoyances and persecutions which he, petted and cherished as he had been by the good sisters, found it difficult to endure patiently. However, he seldom complained; if he found his music-copies torn and blotted, his favorite books hidden, the stops of the organ filled with paper; or if he was saluted with shouts and laughs of derision; if, instead of joining in their rough games at recreation, he preferred to sit apart with a book, — yet there was something in the boy, that, in spite of their petty malice, inspired them with a sort of respect and fear that kept them at a certain distance. And he even had his followers; some few who dared

to show their preference were devoted, and almost slavish, in their attachment. He found his bed hard and dirty, his cell dark and damp, his food poor and scanty; yet he cared for none of these things. Music was his passion, and he applied himself with never-wearying industry.

The *maestro*, although he was a cruel, coarse man, was nevertheless a good teacher, developing to the utmost the talent that had been placed under his charge by one of the greatest patrons of music in Rome. The boy grew slighter and more spiritual each day, and Cardinal Catrucci, when he visited the institution, would say, "He studies too hard, he must have more exercise and amusement. Why does he not play with the other boys during the hours of recreation?"

"He never will," replied the priest. "While the others are shouting and hallooing, running and racing, he walks slowly up and down under the trees, his head bent over a book, or sits in the garden, with his arms folded, looking at the sky; and instead of sleeping he gets out of bed, and goes stealing down the stairs, and through the dark passages to the chapel, where he plays all sorts of odd wild tunes; but now the *maestro* has put a stop to that; he won't have us disturbed at night by the freaks of this half-mad boy."

"*E un ragazzo tanto curioso*," said the Cardinal, slowly walking away and shaking his head thoughtfully.

Guido's chief happiness was to sing in the churches on *festa* days; there was something intoxicating in the decorations, the lights, the flowers, the pictures, the crowds of people, and the strains of the orchestra, that almost made him forget he was on earth. And indeed he sang as though he were already an angel in heaven. People came from far and near to hear the boy sing, and before he was twelve years old he was looked upon as a prodigy.

One day, when Guido was fifteen, there was a great *festa* in Santo Spirito, where he had first sung before the Pope. The church was crowded to overflowing. Sister Agatha and Filomena were there, both looking with pride at their boy, who stood in the orchestra, his arms folded, his head thrown back with an air of conscious superiority, waiting for his solo.

In all his after life Guido Bernardo never forgot that day. The memory of the lights, the crowd of eager, upturned faces, the sudden hush of expectation, the first strains of the orchestra, and the dim blank that followed, often made a cold sweat start on his brow, and a choking sensation fill his throat for a moment, when, years from that time, he arose to sing before a large audience.

The leader raised his baton, the stringed instruments wailed out a few notes; Guido glanced at his music and opened his mouth, but instead of sweet liquid strains there issued only harsh, discordant sounds; he paused, cleared his throat, made another effort, but in vain; his voice was gone! Alas, he could not sing! The leader looked at him severely, a murmur rose from the crowd, the orchestra sounded miles away, the lights danced and whirled, and then everything grew black and indistinct, and the boy fell, pale and unconscious, into the arms of a singer behind him.

They carried him to the hospital, where he lay for many weeks ill with fever and delirium. Sister Agatha and the nuns tended him day and night with unwearying care. At last he was convalescent, but the shadow of himself, — more spiritual, more melancholy than ever. It was the first great disappointment of his life, the first check to his ambitious dreams. He had fancied his future a scene of successes: he had looked forward eagerly to the time when, his studies ended, he should enter the service of the Pope, his proudest desire. Now what had he to live for? His voice was gone, his career ended before it had scarcely begun. He thought with agony of the lost homage and flattery of his audiences, the murmurs of delight and admiration that he should hear no more; his fellows had worshipped him for a little while, and the boy was not insensible to the allurements of fame. Now it was finished, and perhaps the bitterest drop in his cup was the thought of the exultant triumph of his fellow-students, many of whom, even while they cringed and fawned to him in the days of his prosperity, hated him with all the strength of envy and jealousy. He painted to himself the severity and unkindness of the *maestro*, whose interest in him would en because he no longer had the power to do him credit. And sometimes he even feared he should lose the friendship and patronage of the Cardinal.

Poor boy, after he was fully recovered he went back to San Michele, little caring what became of him. If it had not been for the patient encouragement, the wise and tender counsel of Sister Agatha, and the unchanging affection of Filomena, he would have sunk entirely under his terrible disappointment. As it was, his nature seemed to have changed. He was no longer sweet and gentle, but silent, moody, and almost sullen; he seemed to have grown taller and older by years during the few weeks of illness and mental suffering. His first act when he entered the College was to collect together his music-books, exercises, half-finished compositions, and put them all away out of his sight.

"I shall renounce the study of music and devote myself to something else," he said

to the *maestro*, who paid little attention to him since he had ceased to be a prodigy.

"As you please," he replied, coldly; "but losing your voice does not prevent you from becoming a creditable performer if you study closely."

"I have no desire," said the boy, gloomily. "In fact, I hate the sound of music."

There was no more stealing down dark passages at midnight into the chapel, no more hours of dreamy twilight devoted to sweet and tender harmony, that had filled his young soul with ecstasy. Something seemed to have gone out of his life; all the greenness and beauty had faded into dull cold gray. He was like Beethoven, who, after he had lost his hearing, seemed also to have lost his sight.

In this College, where the sciences as well as the fine arts were taught, he had no difficulty in finding some other employment for his thoughts and time. Now books became his only companions; he struggled with Greek, Latin, metaphysics, and philosophy; he experimented in chemistry and geology; he tried to turn the desires of his life into new channels. But in vain; forever in his ears sounded almost mockingly sweet strains of bewitching melody, and ever before his eyes were passing combinations of notes that he knew would produce harmonious sounds; but still he turned resolutely away from their temptations, saying, "No, no, you have proved a fickle mistress; you have disappointed me once, and I now renounce you forever."

He lived a life apart from his fellow-students, he held no more intercourse with them than was absolutely necessary. Neither did he endure any longer with patience their sneers and taunts. A sudden pallor, a flash of lurid, portentous fire from the brown eyes, warned them that there was a lion slumbering under the fleece of the lamb, which it was best not to arouse. So gradually they fell off, avoided him, and left him entirely to his own devices. To no one but Sister Agatha and the Cardinal did he express the disappointment of his retired life. The nun would soothe him gently, telling him if he never sang again on earth he would sing more sweetly before the Madonna in heaven. And the old Cardinal, whose friendship and kindness never abated, would with more worldly wisdom encourage him to be patient, and later his voice would return to him sweeter and stronger than ever; but Guido would only shake his head mournfully and reply, his eyes overflowing with tears, "No, no, it is gone forever."

Through the influence of Cardinal Catrucci he had had a small cell assigned to him alone, and there he often spent most of the night in chemical experiments, or trying resolutely to solve some scientific problem, which too often resulted in failure and disappointment. Still he found in it a sort of unsatisfactory satisfaction, if one might use the term, for it served to distract his thoughts from the one absorbing subject. The other students mockingly called him *matto*, and left him to live out his days in loneliness and sadness. The two years that followed the loss of his voice were years of bitter trial, hopelessness, and despair to poor Guido; but nevertheless the discipline served to strengthen and develop his character, and his studies opened new avenues of knowledge that would have remained forever closed if he had devoted himself only to his beloved art.

From the very first hour Guido entered the College he understood and felt that the *maestro's* interest in him was not sincere, only assumed to please the Cardinal, whose patronage he desired. After the loss of his voice, as he had no longer any motive for acting the part he had undertaken, he let no opportunity pass that offered a chance to insult or impose some new burden on the poor boy, who at last determined to endure it no longer. He was an exquisite copyist of music, and for a long time the *maestro*, unknown to the principal of the College, had been in the habit of taking manuscript from the different churches to rewrite and arrange. This he gave Guido to do, who at first complied willingly; but when he saw that his task increased each day, and interfered with his studies, it grew very irksome, and at last became a thorough drudgery.

One morning he sat at his desk with a scientific work open before him. He was not studying; his head ached and throbbed in an unusual manner. His eyes were hot and tired, for he had not slept the night before until nearly dawn, and these vigils were telling upon him. "How will all this end?" he thought, taking a gloomy retrospect of the last two years, — "how will it end? I am wasting my health and youth in pursuing a shadow; my life is aimless. I shall arrive at nothing because I strive for nothing. The only pursuit I really loved, and would have devoted my life to, is impossible to me now. Why did God give me that glorious voice and then take it away just as I had learned to prize it?" His sad cogitations were interrupted by the *maestro*, who laid before him some sheets of music, bidding him, in a harsh, authoritative tone, to copy them immediately.

"I cannot," replied Guido, firmly; "my studies require all my time, and you have no right to exact this of me."

The *maestro* looked at him a moment in

mute astonishment, and then said, in a voice choked with rage, "Insolent! How dare you disobey me? Give it to me completed before night, or you will repent not having done it."

Guido pushed the manuscript away from him with a look of proud determination on his face as he said, "I will not touch it! I will never copy another bar of music for you again!" He had scarcely finished the sentence when a stinging blow in the face staggered and almost blinded him.

Before the hand that dealt the blow had fallen, he sprang at the throat of the *maestro* with the agility and strength of a young tiger, his face deadly pale, his nostrils distended, and his eyes like glowing coals of fire.

"*Canaglia!*" he said, between his clenched teeth; and he tightened his grasp until the priest's face grew purple and his eyes rolled in their sockets, then, with a long look of scorn and contempt, he threw him heavily to the ground.

The noise brought a half-dozen priests to the spot in a moment, and Guido was dragged away to a small dark cell, — a place of punishment for all unruly students.

There, his whole soul struggling with rage and indignation, his face still smarting from the stinging blow, he threw himself on the pile of straw that served for a bed, and gave vent to his overwrought feelings in convulsive sobs.

"O Christ!" he moaned, "hast thou forgotten the suffering of thy life that thou hast no pity on me? I would have preferred to be good and patient and gentle if this cruelty had not been thrust upon me. I have tried to bear the reproach of my birth, my lost hopes, my ruined career; but why must I endure insult? Ungrateful that I am! Sweet Jesus, wert thou not buffeted, spit upon, and smitten in the face? and yet thou hast not complained, while I, for one blow, one insult, have forgotten all, and been in my rage like a wild beast! O Holy Mother, forgive me!" and he pressed almost frantically to his lips the little crucifix Sister Agatha had given him, and prayed with more fervor of entreaty than ever before in his life.

When he arose from his knees he was calm and subdued. The tempest had swept over a hot and arid desert, and now succeeded a rain of tears. The dry, parched soil was moistened and cooled, and the hungering, thirsting soul was filled with peace.

One morning, six days after his confinement, Guido lay on the straw in his cell, his eyes half closed and dull, his hair matted and damp, his lips black and parched, and the fever spot burning hot and red on his wasted cheeks. The black bread that had been served to him from time to time lay on the floor beside him. He had not tasted any for several days. But the jug for water had been drained with eager haste, and now he was dying with thirst and it would not be replenished for some hours. The yellow morning light stole into the narrow grated window, and lingered lovingly over the haggard face of the boy. The heavy lids drooped lower and lower, and he lapsed into a sort of half delirium, half stupor, in which he was unconscious of his present misery and loneliness, — for he believed himself to be a child in the garden of Santo Spirito, and he babbled faintly of fountains and flowers: "How cool and fresh is the sound of the water as it splashes in the basin, and my bird sings always the same song"; then again he seemed to be in the little chapel, and his fingers strayed over the keys of the organ, while he sang sweet and mournful *Ave Marias;* or he fancied himself in St. Peter's, where the painted angels in the dome and the marble angels on the pillars all became living, floating, and moving; and all the figures in all the pictures came out of the frames and knelt at the altars, and passed to and fro, and joined in the great procession of white-robed priests, while he, high above all, floating in a golden haze, seemed to sing and sing, until every part of the vast cathedral was filled with wondrous melody. Then arose from all the dense crowd below great waves of applause, like the sound of many waters; and the angels gathered around him and murmured words of love and welcome, for they told him he had come to join them and to be with them forever. Suddenly all changed, and he seemed to be sinking slowly, slowly down from a great height of bliss into darkness and despair. With the fall he awoke, and turned his heavy eyes first on the empty jug, then on the small barred window, black, bare walls, and heavy, iron-spiked door.

"Ah," he moaned, "this is the end of all, — to die in this narrow cell, alone, with no one to speak a last word of comfort or to moisten my lips! O for one draught of pure cold water, one breath of fresh morning air! How soon to die, how young to finish life! but it is well." The old smile of infantine sweetness lighted up his face, and he clasped his hands in a sort of ecstasy. "It is well; I shall sing again."

Suddenly there was a noise of many voices outside; the door opened, and Guido saw Cardinal Catrucci on the threshold, followed by several priests.

"Father in heaven!" he exclaimed. "What does this mean? Why did you not tell me the boy was dying in this miserable hole?"

CHAPTER XVI.

VILLA ALDOBRANDINI.

ONE evening in June Guido stood on the balcony of the Villa Aldobrandini, leaning on the arm of Cardinal Catrucci. He was very pale, and wasted almost to a shadow, but as he gazed on the lovely scene before him his face lighted up with an expression of joy and contentment that gave promise of returning health and happiness.

The setting sun painted with golden glory all the broad *campagna*, and brought out here and there spots of emerald green or rich warm brown; touched with dusky bronze the old tombs and ruined aqueducts, the decaying monuments of past glory; the mountains were bathed in violet light; the west was all aglow with streaks of crimson and gold; the dome of St. Peter's stood distinctly outlined against the gorgeous background; the seven-hilled city was before him. She who had once been the mistress of the world reclined, aged and sad, with her robes of antiquity folded in stately dignity about her.

"How exquisitely beautiful!" exclaimed Guido, after a long, intense gaze. "It is strange I have never before felt the beauty of nature as now; perhaps it is because my heart is at rest and I am happy."

"Poor boy," said the Cardinal, kindly, "you have suffered so much that comfort and peace seem like paradise to you. The evening air from the *campagna* is too chilly in your present feeble condition. Let us go into the garden; the sound of the cascade and fountains have a peculiar charm for me at this hour"; and, supporting Guido tenderly, they passed through the grand hall and out into the court, where the cascade from the hillside leapt down its marble stairs, and fell into the immense basin with a cool, splashing sound, that made the boy's sluggish blood bound and flow through his veins with signs of returning health.

Terrace rose above terrace, crowned with ilex, olive, and acacia; against the waxy blossoms of the orange-trees glowed in strong contrast the crimson clusters of the granito. In the midst fell the silvery sheet of water, white with foam, — white as the new-fallen snow. Above the opening in the trees hung the crescent moon, with her lovely attendant gently following in her wake. The marble statues gleamed against the dark background, the flowers, heavy with dew, gave forth their varied and delicate perfume, the birds on tired wings whirled and circled and sang a few clear sweet strains ere they dropped down into their nests for the night.

"How can I thank you enough for bringing me here!" said Guido, sinking down, pale and exhausted, into a garden chair.

"By getting well and strong as fast as possible," replied the Cardinal. "During these two weeks I find you have gained much, and you look a little less like a spirit than the day I brought you here. Poor boy, I thought you would not live a week!" and the tears glistened in the speaker's eyes.

"I had suffered so much," replied Guido. "I thought I should die alone in that dreadful place, shut out from the air and light of heaven. It seemed about all ended for me, when you came, like an angel of God, to save me."

"*Canaglia!*" said the Cardinal, with an expression of the deepest disgust. "They tried to prevent me from seeing you; they told me twenty lies before I found out where you were. But never mind talking about that now, my boy; it is all over, and you will not go back to San Michele again."

"O, thanks, thanks!" said Guido, kissing the hand of his benefactor with an expression of the deepest gratitude. "I can do nothing there; but let me remain with you, I shall be so contented and happy."

"Don't think of the future now, the first consideration is to get well, and then we shall do what is best. You must not remain here any longer; the sun has set, and there may be poison in this balmy air."

Guido arose, and, throwing back his head with a sigh of happiness, he exclaimed, "I know my voice will come back to me; my heart tells me I shall sing again. Yes, even now, I think I could sing."

And, trembling with excitement, he walked hastily to the house, scarcely leaning on the Cardinal. Entering the grand *salon*, dim in the twilight, he seated himself at the piano, and drew forth a few timid, wavering sounds; then his touch became firmer, and he played the prelude to an *Ave Maria*. Suddenly his voice broke forth in a plaintive strain. "*Virgine santa, Madre di Dio*," he sang, but no more in the clear liquid soprano of other days; his voice had changed to a rich contralto. At first it was a little broken and uncertain, but as he continued it gained in strength and purity, rising in sweet and noble pathos, filling with wonderful melody every corner of the vaulted apartment. The Cardinal listened in mute astonishment until the last strain was finished, and then, springing forward, he clasped Guido in his arms, almost beside himself with delight.

The boy withdrew himself from the embrace of his friend, and raising his eyes to heaven, with a touching expression of gratitude, he said, solemnly, "I thank thee, O God, because thou has been better to me than I dared hope. Now indeed I am happy."

From that moment Guido recovered his

health rapidly. The sorrow that had so long preyed upon him was removed; his old sweetness of manner returned; his lips again wore their gentle but half-melancholy smile; his eyes beamed with joy and gratitude. The hope of his childhood was renewed to him. The two years that had intervened were like a dark, troubled dream, which he tried to forget.

He practised and studied constantly, seeming contented only when engaged in his labor of love.

Cardinal Catrucci often smiled with satisfaction to see how light and firm his step grew, how clear and happy his voice sounded, as he passed through the gardens and long corridors of the villa. One day he said to Guido, "I have decided as to your future studies, and have arranged for you to enter the Conservatory of Bologna, where you are to remain until you are twenty. Now your health is re-established we must return to Rome to make the necessary preparation for your immediate departure."

Guido heard this news with delight, for it had been his secret wish to study in this school, famed throughout Italy. Then close upon his joy came the sad thought that he must leave the friend who had been a father to him, and to whom his heart was bound by the strongest ties of gratitude and affection.

When he expressed his sorrow, the Cardinal smiled a little sadly and said, "I shall miss you, it is true; but, my dear boy, you will find many things in your new life to distract your thoughts from me; and the strongest proof you can give me of your love is to make yourself a career worthy your talents and noble nature. I ask no other reward."

When Sister Agatha heard of the change in the boy's prospects, and when he sang to her, her joy and gratitude to the Madonna were expressed with mingled prayers, smiles, and tears. "Oh!" she said, looking at him fondly, "how good our Blessed Mother has been to you! She has restored your voice, stronger, sweeter, and more wonderful than ever. I hope you will show your gratitude by devoting it entirely to the service of the *Santo Padre*. Forget the world, Guido; do not strive for the applause of men, sing only to praise God."

Filomena and the nun both busied themselves in preparing his linen, and adding what they could to his slender wardrobe.

The little Mona had grown into a most charming girl, and Guido loved her very tenderly, but always with the affection of a brother. He often said to himself, "When I make a name, and become rich, I will place her in a position worthy of her beauty."

After a little time his arrangements were completed, and he went forth to his new life, loaded with the good wishes and blessings of his friends.

It was a proud and happy day for Guido, when, after two years' absence, he returned to Rome with all the honors of the Conservatory heaped upon him.

A fine, manly form, a bearing proud and *distingué*, a face that expressed the purest and most noble sentiments, manners elegant and refined, a character calm and self-sustained, neither taciturn nor gay, but grave and gentle. A wonderful talent that all admired and appreciated placed him at once in a position that entirely satisfied the most ambitious wish of his kind patron, the Cardinal.

Sister Agatha and Filomena rejoiced over him with infinite pride and tenderness. He as no longer to them *Guido mio*, but *il maestro*.

Filomena and her husband had prospered in a worldly point of view during the absence of Guido, but a heavy sorrow had fallen upon them. Their only child, their lovely, gentle Mona, had suddenly disappeared shortly after his departure, and since that time she had been as one dead to them. They believed she had secretly married and then left her home with a wealthy *Signore Inglese*, with whom she was living somewhere in elegance and comfort; but she had abandoned, without a word of farewell, the parents who loved her to idolatry, and that was an overwhelming calamity to the poor mother, who had lost all her children save this one. Often she would exclaim, "O, if she had only died with the others!"

Shortly after her disappearance a large sum of money had come to them from an unknown donor, which they supposed to be a penitential offering from their child, so they used it to furnish an apartment, the rent of which supported them in comfort.

"Now," said Filomena, after recounting her sad story to Guido, who listened mournfully, his heart filled with sorrow at the uncertain fate of the sweet girl whom he had loved as a sister, "now that we have no child, we hope you will live with us. There is a room we never use, which will do nicely for you, and it is yours always. It is true it overlooks the court, but the sun shines in pleasantly all day, and the flowers on the balcony make a pretty bit of color from the window, and you can hear the fountain always with its gentle murmur, which is very soothing when one is tired."

Guido thanked the kind-hearted woman for her generous offer, which he accepted without hesitation, and when he was finally settled under her care Filomena seemed almost to forget her trouble, for certainly she was happier. After looking at Guido, she would say, with a thoughtful smile, "Perhaps

now I shall hear from my child, for you have always brought me good luck."

Sister Agatha came to visit them as often as her duties permitted her. These were happy hours for the poor nun; her heart was at rest; the child she had so loved and cared for was settled in life, poor, it was true, but with an honorable and respectable career before him.

Shortly after his return, the dream of Guido's childhood was realized, — he became one of the Pope's singers. His voice during his studies had developed and strengthened, and he now sang a pure rich tenor, which lacked nothing of the expression and pathos of the soprano with which he had fascinated the public in his childhood.

It was Easter Sunday when Guido first sang in the papal choir, and all the angels in heaven seemed to sing with him as he walked before the Pope in the imposing procession. It was a day of rejoicing to the world, the day of Christ's resurrection and triumph, and he joined with his whole soul in the exulting song of *Christus resurgens*. Among the crowd of spectators was Guido's old enemy, the *maestro* of San Michele, who looked at him with the same feelings of envy and jealousy.

And Sister Agatha and Filomena were there. Now, indeed, their proudest desires were realized. How handsome and noble he looked in his purple silk robes and lace surplice! and Cardinal Catrucci glanced at him more than once, well satisfied with the result of his patronage.

From that time Guido's position was assured. Through the influence of the Cardinal, and by the charm of his talent and gentle manners, he was received into the best Italian and foreign society. Although he had reached what then seemed to him the greatest height to which he could attain, yet he was not entirely happy. There was a melancholy, proud reserve in his nature that kept him from intimate association with those around him, and he lived almost the same life of seclusion as in the days of his scholarship at San Michele. The uncertainty connected with his birth served in a manner to separate him from the world; and although he was accepted and flattered for his talent, he well knew there was a barrier between him and society which could not be levelled. Then the rules of the papal choir exacted from the members, outwardly, the same forms and restrictions that governed the lives of the clergy; they were under vows of celibacy while in the service of the Pope, and wore the dress of a priest. This had never been at all irksome to Guido, on account of his quiet, retired life, and he had never thought of marriage because he had never loved. He was a student, no longer an experimenter; he pursued his beloved profession with enthusiasm and devotion, desiring to gain distinction, not only as a singer, but also as a composer.

One day, five years after he had entered the service of the Pope, Guido sat alone in the same little room that Filomena had offered him after his return from Bologna. Outwardly, nothing had changed around him. The same flowers bloomed on the balcony, the same fountain sparkled and splashed in the court below, and the same sun threw its slanting rays over the picture of the Madonna that hung above his piano. But, inwardly, that great change had come to him that comes to us but once in a life. He sat before his piano, but his fingers only strayed in dreamy idleness over the minor notes, his eyes, melancholy but infinitely sweet, were fixed on vacancy, and a tender smile played around his mouth.

That day a vision had crossed his path, a face of delicate beauty haunted him, and a gentle voice filled with a peculiar melody every chamber of his heart.

CHAPTER XVII.

CAPELLA DEL CORO.

IT was Sunday, and crowds were pouring into St. Peter's, to listen to the vespers that the choir were singing in the Capella del Coro. Being nearly *Ave Maria*, the vast building was in half-gloom. The last rays of sunlight illumined with indescribable radiance the emblem of the Holy Spirit above the tribune. The great dome, side chapels, and vaulted nave, peopled with marble and pictured figures, seemed larger and more mysterious because of the shadowy and indistinct outlines. The massive *baldacchino* of bronze covering the high altar appeared a temple in itself. The light from the hundred silver lamps around the tomb of St. Peter threw long slanting rays across the polished marble floor. Here and there kneeling, motionless figures gave an aspect of quiet solemnity to the whole scene. Although a crowd surrounded the door of the Capella del Coro in the left aisle, the vast nave was almost empty, and the strains of the choir singing there could scarcely be heard by those praying in the tribune.

It was one of those moments when the soul was best fitted to feel and understand the sublimity of the place; when one could not contemplate long this achievement of the immortal genius of Michael Angelo and Raphael without feeling that the God who reigns in this immensity, and who alone can fill it, is not only the God of men, but the God of gods.

Such were the thoughts that passed

through the mind of Constance as she stood in the tribune, her eyes wandering from pillar to pillar down the shadowy length of the nave, and in some such words did she express her feelings to Madame Landel, who stood near her looking at the beautiful mausoleum of Paul III., with its exquisite figures of Prudence and Justice, which the false delicacy of modern taste has covered with a drapery of painted lead. Mrs. Tremaine and Mr. Carnegie paced slowly back and forth, discussing the merits of this world-renowned temple of the Most High. It was the first visit of Constance and Helen, and nothing could exceed their delight, astonishment, and admiration.

"I am very glad you have seen St. Peter's for the first time at this hour," said Mr. Carnegie; "no other impression can be so profound and lasting. The illusion of the half-light blends and softens all the projecting lines that somewhat disturb the harmony of the whole, making it appear more immense, more solemn, and more mysterious than under the broad light of day. How effective are the golden beams streaming through the stained window of the tribune contrasted with the silver rays of the lamps around the altar, while all the vast dome and vaulted nave are in shadow! and see, far down at the door the people passing in and out look like tiny moving shadows, and one can judge something of the size by the far-off sound of the choir, which is only half the length of the church from us."

"Let us go nearer," said Constance. "I prefer to listen to sacred music at this hour, and in this place it has a double charm; a tender melancholy seems to float in the very air, as though the spirits of the past brushed with their shadowy wings the moving forms of the present."

And so, talking softly as they went, they walked toward the chapel where the choir were singing vespers. Every seat was filled, and around the door was a dense crowd, quiet, orderly, but evidently expectant. With some little effort they pushed their way into the chapel, and stood leaning against some massive pillars opposite the singers.

Constance, who had never before witnessed the gorgeous ceremonies of the Catholic Church, watched with curious attention the priests in their white and golden robes, passing slowly before the canons in their stalls, swinging the censers and chanting inharmoniously, while the perfumed smoke enveloped them all in a cloud that gradually arose, floated, and dispersed like a silvery mist into the vaulted pictured roof. She noted all this with a strange interest, scarcely heeding the choir, until there burst upon her ear a strain of melody, — a single voice so rich and clear, so filled with tender harmony, that the memory of it never left her in all her after life. She raised her eyes, and before her in the low orchestra, outlined against the golden pipes of the organ, like a saint of Cimabue, stood a young man in the classic black robes of a Roman priest. His arms were folded and his head slightly thrown back, while over his pale, earnest face beamed an expression of deep enthusiasm that lighted up a pair of sad dark eyes and lingered around a mouth of peculiar sweetness. His form was a little above the medium height, slight and graceful; his neck rose from the narrow white band like a marble column; the head was small, the brow broad and high, from which the waving brown hair was thrown back in careless grace, falling to the shoulders and over the broad collar of his black mantle, as he stood before them. He appeared an inspiration of youth and genius, an almost divine impersonation of manhood. His face was stamped with the glowing spirituality of Raphael as well as the more tender melancholy of his worshipper, Parmigiano. He seemed unmindful of all around him as he poured forth strains the power and pathos of which touched and thrilled every heart, bearing the soul with the mournful pleading melody almost into the presence of the Holy Mother whose praises he sang. Constance, with her uplifted face and earnest eyes, seemed drinking in every tone of the wonderful voice. When he had finished his solo, without as much as glancing at the crowd below him he turned and left the orchestra.

"O, what an exquisite voice!" exclaimed Mrs. Tremaine. "I think I never heard any one sing with such expression."

"Do you know his name, Mr. Carnegie?" inquired Constance.

"I do not remember, although I heard it often last winter. He is the Pope's most celebrated singer."

Quietly the crowd dispersed, and spread over the church, some kneeling at the different altars, some pacing slowly back and forth, while others regarded the pictures, tombs, and statues.

Constance lingered near the monument of the unhappy Pretender, James, the last of the Stuart kings, thinking sadly of the poor exile dying far from his own land, of his vain struggles, his lost and ruined hopes, all ending in this record of the uncertainty of human greatness.

"He rests beneath the shadow of a world-renowned temple," said Mr. Carnegie; "and his monument is the work of Canova. I think it might reconcile one to dying in exile if his last resting-place could be immortalized by the productions of the most sublime genius of every age. Whichever way we look we see the divine imprint of Michael

Angelo, Raphael, Canova, Thorwaldsen, and a host of other luminaries that have beamed from time to time upon the world with more or less radiance."

"I have formed many vague fancies respecting this edifice and its surroundings," remarked Constance, as they walked down the gradual descent of broad steps that lead to the *piazza;* "but nothing, no matter how grand and stately, has ever approached the reality. Look back, and contrast the height of the people with the entrance. Why, they are mere pigmies in comparison! And how imposing is this great square, with the antique obelisk in the centre, that once threw its long shadow over some temple of Heliopolis, and the two massive but simple fountains on each side, throwing up their silvery spray to the top of the stately colonnade that encloses all in a vast semicircle! The statues seem like a solemn procession of figures that ever march in single file upon the summit. How clearly every outline is defined against the sky, as quietly and calmly the gray twilight settles over all!"

"It is very grand and magnificent, and all that," said Mrs. Tremaine, with an affected shiver; "but it strikes me with a cold melancholy, that makes me wish for the carriage and a turn on the Pincio before it is quite dark. I desire to see something of the beauty and fashion of Rome as well as its antiquity."

"You will see enough of the Pincio, my dear, before the winter is over," replied Madame Landel, "as every day's drive terminates there. It is very brilliant and gay, I believe; but I must say I prefer places that the crowd of fashionables do not care to visit."

"And I like the quieter drives also," said Constance; "but if Helen is so amiable as to allow herself to be dragged about all day to see antiquities, which she affects not to like, we must indulge her with a little pleasure at the end."

"We almost forget it is Sunday, my dear," gently remonstrated Madame Landel. "It seems hardly right to drive on the Pincio."

"O, I can assure you every one does it. It is quite the thing, and Mrs. Tremaine wishes it so much," interposed Mr. Carnegie.

"I think we will for this once," said Constance, with a little smile, "but I am sure none of us will wish to make a habit of doing it, if we think it is not right."

"O, how ridiculous!" laughed Mrs. Tremaine. "I hope none of us will spoil the day's pleasure by an affectation of piety. I have lived so long in Paris I never think of such things. Why, Mr. Carnegie, we went to the race at Longchamps on Sunday!"

"O you foolish child, to expose our wickedness!" and Mr. Carnegie shook his finger threateningly at her, while his eyes beamed with pleasure at the memory of a happy day.

And so the carriage rolled on swiftly toward the Pincio, by the grim old castle of St. Angelo, crowned with the glorious archangel of Wenschefeld, over the noble bridge built by Hadrian, and disfigured by the exaggerated statues of the school of Bernini, and through the narrow, irregular streets, growing gray and gloomy in the gathering twilight.

Suddenly Mrs. Tremaine exclaimed, after what seemed a long silence for her, "I am always thinking of the wonderful voice and wonderful face of that wonderful singer. Have you ever seen such sad eyes? and the enthusiastic expression of his face while he sang made me think of Apollo and all sorts of musical divinities."

The sweet lips of Constance did not echo the words of Mrs. Tremaine, but her heart did, for she had already wondered why she thought so much of this singer.

"There is something touching in the pathos of his voice; it seems filled with tears," was the only remark she hazarded.

"I was particularly struck by his noble air and remarkable face," said Madame Landel. "I am sure, let him be who he may, he has a history."

"O, how brilliant, how gay, how beautiful!" exclaimed Mrs. Tremaine, as the carriage passed through the gates, and up the ascent to the Pincio.

Far above them rose a succession of marble terraces, ornamented with statues, fountains, flowers, and odorous shrubs; the feathery acacia drooped in verdant luxuriance; the magnolia unfolded its creamy blossoms, and made the faint air almost sick with their perfume; the oleander flung down showers of crimson leaves mixed with the waxen petals of the orange; the gorgeous cactus flamed fire against the dark ilex, while the oriental palm, the stately stone pine, and the solemn cypress, united to form beauty, greenness, and shade. The massive flight of marble steps; the water falling over moss-covered rocks into the time-stained, moss-covered basins; the graceful winding walks bordered with hedges of roses and ivy intwined; the smoothed clipped turf the beds of tropical flowers, flaunting in robes of every hue; the soft balmy air; the golden glow of the setting sun; the merry chatter of children; the light laughter of the gay throng, mingled with the clear strains of the band, — all formed a scene of enchanting beauty easier to imagine than to describe.

"I thought," said Mrs. Tremaine, as they stood on the highest terrace, and looked far below them into the Piazza del Popolo, with its twin churches, obelisk, and marvellous

fountain, — "I thought there could be no other park or garden so beautiful as Hyde Park or the Bois; but I believe this is more charming than either. I am sure it is more interesting because we have the city of the world at our feet; and is it not strange how near the dome of St. Peter's appears to us now?"

"Yes," replied Constance, "I was just thinking of it, and speculating on the singularity of atmospheric effects. As the sun sinks, and darkness surrounds it, it seems larger and higher; and how gray and sad and sombre the plain is below us! One might say all the life and light had centred here, and the great city was deserted, pulseless, and still."

"Look yonder on Monte Mario," exclaimed Mr. Carnegie. "Turner's pine and all the grim cypresses are outlined against a background of gold; like the pictures of Giotto, the middle distance is black with shadows, and the foreground is gray and dull where the Tiber floats across it. How peculiar the effect is with all the light behind!"

"How Claude Lorraine would have exulted in such a scene!" said Constance, who stood, with all her soul in her eyes, gazing into the distance, tracing a thousand lovely forms and tints in this divine picture, touched with the glory of the great Master.

"Do tell us who a few of these people are, Mr. Carnegie," interrupted Mrs. Tremaine. "You have been in Rome so many seasons you ought to know every one of any importance. Who are these elegant girls in such magnificent toilets, leaning on the arm of the old gentleman? and who is that Adonis in immaculate gloves who walks by the side of the prettiest, whispering sweet nothings in her not unwilling ear?"

"The old gentleman is an American banker, immensely rich, and the girls are his daughters, who are to be sold to some young scion of nobility. The young gentleman is the Prince Conti, the last of one of the oldest and most impoverished Roman families; one of his palaces was sold under the hammer of the auctioneer a year ago, and it is said his last was recently mortgaged. It seems that last season Conti was fairly caught by this lovely miss, but the papa would not pay enough for the title, and so the Prince holds off, hoping he will come to better terms later.

The party they were speaking of turned at that moment and walked toward them, and as they met all noticed the marked glance of admiration with which the Prince favored Mrs. Tremaine. She blushed slightly, and said as they passed, "He is handsome, is he not? and indeed he has the air of a prince. I should have known he belonged to the old Roman nobility if you had not told me."

"I cannot perceive that he is different from the other young Italians lounging about here," remarked Mr. Carnegie, uneasily; at which Mrs. Tremaine laughed maliciously, with a sly glance at Constance.

"Who are those strange-looking people in that magnificent carriage, with servants in such striking livery?" inquired Madame Landel.

"O, that is a *parvenu* Roman prince with his family; he is as rich as Rothschild, and has bought his title with his money. The wife by his side is half mad, and those two inane, expressionless girls on the front seat are nearly idiotic. He desires to find husbands for them among the real nobility; as he has no sons, he will dower them well. Is it not a strange *ménage?*"

"What frights!" exclaimed Mrs. Tremaine, putting her handkerchief to her mouth to conceal her laughter, as three slim and not youthful girls, in yellow gray, looking as much alike and as stiff as three wax candles, passed by in the rear of their dragon, an old lady with spectacles, little white tufts of hair sticking on each side of her head, and a long, sharp nose that gave indication of frequent and earnest libations to the god Bacchus. She marched ahead like a wary general, keeping a good lookout for the enemy, in the shape of dark-eyed, smooth-tongued young Italians.

"By George! the 'Three Graces' again," said Mr. Carnegie, as they sailed out of sight. "For six winters these fair creatures have been in Rome. They are victims to respectability, English, of respectable family and respectable fortune; they go about with respectability written on their prim faces, and their chief mission is to discover a want of respectability in their fellow-creatures. The dragon who guarded the golden fleece of Ætes never was more watchful than this old horror, who always forms the vanguard, well prepared to do battle with any number of fortune-hunters."

"I think she gives herself unnecessary trouble; their faces will repel what their fortunes attract," remarked Constance, with a quiet smile.

"Come, my dears," interrupted Madame Landel, "it is getting late; most of the carriages have gone down, and we must follow. Mr. Carnegie will defer his amusing biographies until another day."

Every eye followed the two beautiful girls as they walked slowly back to the carriage, — both so lovely, yet so diverse in their beauty. Constance, in deep mourning, with pale sweet face and dark hair, was very interesting; but Mrs. Tremaine, fair and tall, with her white feathers drooping over

her luxuriant golden hair, was certainly the more attractive. They differed as do the soft twilight and the rosy dawn.

As they rode slowly down the descent in the long train of carriages, Constance contrasted the warm balmy air and the luxuriant vegetation with the wild October winds that were sweeping down showers of dead leaves over her beloved graves at Helmsford. For a moment tears dimmed her eyes, but suddenly the memory of a thrilling voice and a pale, inspired face started up before her and drove the other thought from her heart.

Guido Bernardo, his services finished at St. Peter's, walked slowly down the grand piazza, under the colonnade, to the Porta St. Angelo, and out into the country to the quiet, dreamy shores of the Tiber. There, with his arms folded and his head bent, lost in profound contemplation over a combination of notes that should produce an exquisite *Ave Maria* if he could only find the words, he followed almost mechanically the winding of the river. It was his favorite walk after his Sunday duties in the chapel; but to-day he hurried that he might get home quicker to write down the vague sounds that were floating through his brain. He did not pause, as usual, to glance at the picturesque buildings on the other shore, their windows all aflame with the glow of sunset; neither did he notice the different tints and harmony in the coloring around him, or his favorite birds that wheeled and circled above his head with a fearlessness that showed their instinct taught them his nature was loving and gentle. He went on, crossing the Ponte Molle without thinking of the different scenes of conflicts that had been enacted there; of one calm, lovely evening when the ghastly body of Maxentius was hurled from its parapet, after his defeat by Constantine; nor of the struggle of the brave insurgents against the French invaders in 1849. No, he thought of none of these things, for his hymn to the Virgin was floating through his brain in sweet, sad, minor notes. He entered the Porta del Popolo just as the carriages were rolling out of the Pincian gate; a face that seemed to him of divine beauty, ay, as lovely as the Blessed Virgin, flitted by him and passed out of sight. Guido went home, and that face mingled with the music that floated around him, while he wrote and dreamed far into the night. And Mrs. Tremaine laughed lightly and chatted freely of her admiration for the Adonis, as she termed the Prince Conti. And Constance more than once started to find herself thinking of the voice that had sung *Ave Maria;* and so more than one character in this chapter had met her fate without knowing it.

CHAPTER XVIII.

IL MAESTRO.

A WEEK after their arrival in Rome, Madame Landel, Constance, and Mrs. Tremaine were settled for the winter in a magnificent old palace near the Pincio, and Mr. Carnegie had found a comfortable bachelor apartment in the neighborhood. They had searched everywhere, and had turned away disgusted more than once at the dark, dirty, ill-furnished rooms that were shown them, when one day they were passing this palazzo, whose gray time-worn exterior presented very little attraction until they caught sight of a large sunny court, nicely paved and ornamented with flowers and shrubs in stone pots, while in the centre a curious old fountain threw up streams of clear cool water, that fell again into the basin with a gentle murmur. Constance glanced over the door and saw the usual sign: "*Appartamento mobiliato al terzo piano.*"

"Come," she said, "let us go up and inspect this place; it certainly looks more inviting than anything we have seen."

They passed up a flight of broad marble stairs, not over-clean, ornamented with heavy balustrades of elaborately carved stone, and rang at a door barred and spiked with iron, like the entrance to a prison. An honest-looking, well-dressed woman, with a red mark on her cheek, desired them to enter.

They passed through a rather dreary, cold, and stately ante-room, paved with square blocks of marble in black and white. Around the walls were arranged with stiff precision antique carved chairs, dark and grim with the stains of time. In each corner stood a plaster cast from some ancient well-known statue, and on the walls hung several black, dingy copies from the old masters. The woman opened an inner door, and, throwing aside some heavy crimson curtains, with evident pride and self-satisfaction displayed the interior of a charming *salon*, large enough to make four ordinary English drawing-rooms. From lofty windows, through curtains of crimson and lace, streamed in the warm noonday sun, over stands of fragrant flowers, lighting up the colors in the rich carpet. The walls were hung with crimson and gold, and on the painted ceiling floated nymphs, cherubs, and cupids, sporting with garlands of lilies and roses. Heavy, comfortable furniture, large inviting sofas, and cosey arm-chairs, were arranged with much taste around the room. Two heavy-carved consoles, with antique marble tops covered with *bric-à-brac* of all sorts, a number of rather good pictures, alabaster statuettes on pretty pedes-

tals, and some heavy silver candelabra, gave the room an elegant as well as a cheerful appearance.

"Oh!" exclaimed Mrs. Tremaine, at the first glance, "this will suit us exactly. Is it not beautiful?"

"Wait a moment, my dear, before we decide," interrupted the more practical Madame Landel; "we must first know if there are sleeping-rooms, dining-rooms, and other conveniences."

"See what a charming view!" said Constance, as she looked out on the sunny crest of the Pincio. "If there are chambers enough, nothing could be more delightful. Really this *salon* is quite regal."

"It is the size and height and the painted ceiling that give it the air magnificent," observed Mr. Carnegie, who was attentively examining a piece of peculiar old china. "I believe this is a vase of genuine *Capo di Monti*. Is it not beautiful, Mrs. Tremaine?"

"No, really I cannot say I think it is," replied Mrs. Tremaine, laughing. "These chubby red cherubs blowing soap-bubbles, and the dirty yellow background, are not particularly pleasing."

Mr. Carnegie said nothing, but put it down with a sigh at her bad taste, and went on inspecting what he fondly believed to be a collection of *Buen Retiro*, Vienna, Dresden, and I know not what else, while the ladies examined bedrooms, which they found to be the exact number wanted; looked over linen, china, and silver; bargained for service, rent, fuel, food, and all the other necessaries of life, which were finally agreed upon satisfactorily, and they turned to leave, delighted with such an agreeable acquisition.

As they were going out, Mr. Carnegie asked the woman how she had come in possession of all these curious old things.

"O *Signor mio*," she said, with a sigh, "it is a long story to tell, how we got the money, my Benedetto and me. But when we wanted to take the apartment we found it just as it is now. An old *contessa* had died, and left nothing but this furniture. *Povera contessa*, she was entirely ruined by her nephew, who was a *cattivo ragazzo*. After his aunt died he wished to leave Rome and go to Paris; so, as we had the ready money to pay, he let us have it all for very little. Once the whole palace belonged to his family, but long ago it was sold to pay his debts, and all the furniture and pictures of all the rooms, except this suite, which the poor *contessa* kept for herself. We were fortunate to get it, for it is a favorite apartment with all the *forestieri*, and we always let it early in the season. But my poor Benedetto and me, we have had trouble enough, so it is time now to be blessed with some good luck." And she sighed heavily as she opened the door. "*A rivedere*. I hope to make you very comfortable to-morrow."

The next day, when they sat down to dinner in their well-arranged dining-room, with antique sideboard, straight carved chairs, curious old silver and china, and the huge brass *scaldino*, filled with coals to take the chill off the air, which after sunset was damp, Mrs. Tremaine declared she was perfectly happy, and that living in a palace, and being surrounded by what had belonged to a countess, made her fancy herself an ancient Roman lady in her paternal palace, attended by all the pomp and magnificence of the *moyen age*.

Constance said little; she was quiet and serious, as she always was at every change they made, for she thought much of her lost home. It was not easy for her to lay aside the old life, with its regular English routine so formal and strict, and adapt herself at once to the new, with the freedom and Bohemianism incidental to Continental wandering. However, the change in all was not unpleasant, and they congratulated themselves more than once that they were so agreeably settled for the winter.

"So near my dear Pincio," said Helen; "and such a nice large *salon!* We can give little receptions and tea-parties. And we must find out and cultivate all the desirable people, — all the lions, musical, artistic, and literary. With dear Madame and Mr. Carnegie for our chaperons we can go everywhere and do everything."

'You forget," said Constance, sadly glancing at her mourning dress, "I cannot go into society this winter."

"O, I can assure you it is quite the thing on the Continent to go to small receptions, concerts, and such innocent amusements, if one is in mourning. Of course, operas and balls are quite another thing."

"But I have not the desire," replied Constance, with tearful eyes; "you must remember how much I have suffered recently. You can always go with Madame Landel, and I will stay at home quietly and study music and archæology."

"We won't talk of that now, my dears," said Madame Landel, gently; "we will take everything as it comes, and dispose of it as we think best. In our own home we can always surround ourselves with desirable society, and yet not be very gay or fashionable."

"But I *do* want to be gay!" cried Mrs. Tremaine. "I want to see all the fashionable society of Rome. I want to go to balls, to the opera, to the hunt, and all that, and, when it is finished, for Lent I will be as serious as you please."

Mr. Carnegie entered at that moment, and Mrs. Tremaine appealed to him.

"Is it not too bad? Madame and Con-

stance are going to shut themselves up all winter, so I cannot go into society!"

"That will be a great loss to society," replied Mr. Carnegie; "but don't make yourself unhappy on that account. I see you are determined to break the hearts of a score of these dark-eyed princes and counts, and you shall have a fair chance. If the ladies are determined to remain in seclusion, I shall find some friend to chaperone you; and you shall not waste your sweetness on the desert air."

He sighed and laughed together at her rapturous thanks, wishing in his heart that she was not so beautiful. "What chance is there for me?" he thought. "She will be sought after, surrounded, and flattered; her grace, youth, elegance, and wit will make her the adored of one sex, while she will be the victim of the other. The world will be hard on her. She is so independent, free, and frank, they will mistake it for lightness, and while they flatter her to her face, they will slander and wound her when she has turned away." He felt a stern sort of pleasure in knowing that he should always be near her to teach her by his devotion the difference between his love and the hypocrisy of the world. "After they have deceived and disgusted her by their falsehood and insincerity, perhaps she will turn to me. I can wait. Yes, I love her truly and deeply, and I can wait." Such were his thoughts as he watched her, with earnest love in every glance, flitting here and there about the great dimly lighted room, her fair hair, lovely face, graceful figure, and pale blue dress making of her a model for a mediæval saint.

She insisted that Constance should sing while she tried the piano, which had been brought in during the day; and as she sat running her fingers lightly over the keys, her face upturned to her friend, who was leaning on her shoulder, he thought a more lovely inspiration for an artist could not be desired.

Madame Landel and he sipped their tea by the bright wood fire while the girls sang; and Guido Bernardo, alone in his dull room, smiled as he tore open and read a note which he found on his table.

When Mr. Carnegie wished them good night, Constance exclaimed, "Did you inquire to-day about a master for me?"

"Yes, indeed I did. Have you ever known me to forget a commission? I have found the best master in Rome, and despatched a note to him desiring him to call on you to-morrow at eleven. I hope you will like him."

"Is he young or old, handsome or ugly?" demanded Mrs. Tremaine.

"I am sorry, but I cannot inform you on that point. As I did not suppose his looks or age were of importance, I made inquiries only respecting his merits as a teacher, and I have been told that he is the first master in Rome."

"O, if he should prove to be that angelic singer of St. Peter's, I too should become a student at once," lightly rejoined Mrs. Tremaine.

And Constance, long after she had laid her head on her pillow, thought, "What if he should be that angelic singer of St. Peter's?"

The next morning she was awakened by some one singing near her. She listened half in a doubt whether it were a dream or a reality; but she was fully awake, the sun shone into her room, and she could hear the murmur of the fountain in the court below. Yes, some one was singing to the accompaniment of a piano, and she thought she had heard the voice before, — a voice most rich, clear, and triumphant. Sometimes it would fall into a low, plaintive strain, and then break forth joyously, as though happy birds were let loose from the heart of the singer. Almost breathless, she followed the voice through all the intricacies of sound, thinking always in her heart, "It must be; there can be no other voice like his." She arose, threw on her dressing-gown, and opened the window. The fresh morning breeze, the odor of flowers, and the warm sunshine greeted her lovingly. Almost opposite, on the other side of the court, was an open window, and from that floated the voice that was like the sound of angels singing in paradise.

A strange feeling of exaltation filled her heart. She raised her eyes to the blue sky, to the waving trees, on the face of the hills, to the long stretch of mountains bathed in golden mist, and she murmured, "O my God, I thank thee, because the world is so beautiful. Darkness has endured for the night, and now with the morning cometh light and joy." With that song there entered into her heart a new peace, strange and sweet. What it was she knew not, but the shadows that had hung over her so long seemed to have arisen, floated away, and disappeared in the clear blue of the distant heavens.

On the impulse of her new happiness she wrote a long letter to Lady Dinsmore, telling her of her changed feelings, her new home, and her first impressions of the Eternal City. Just as she was closing it a servant knocked at the door, and told her some one was waiting for her in the *salon*.

She glanced in the mirror, smoothing a little the waves of her hair, and arranging the cord that confined her black cashmere morning-dress, and then entered the *salon*.

A tall graceful figure in the robes of a

priest, stood with his back to the door looking at a picture over the piano. He did not see her until she was by his side and spoke. Then he turned, and she saw before her the noble face, the dark melancholy eyes, and the gentle smile of Guido Bernardo, the singer of St. Peter's. A faint flush passed over his face, but he bowed calmly, and, she thought, a little proudly, and then waited for her to speak.

There was a strange agitation in her heart that she could not control as she desired him to be seated, and began to speak in regard to her studies. His grave, refined manner, the intelligence and simple sincerity of his remarks, placed her at once at her ease, and convinced her that she was talking to a person of no ordinary character and talent, and to one in no way inferior to herself.

After a little conversation, he desired her to sing, that he might judge of her style. When she had finished he did not flatter her in the least, but told her simply that her voice was very flexible and sweet, yet she had fallen into some serious faults of execution which she must correct at once. There was a force and gravity in his words that impressed her with a belief in his superior genius; and although he was young, his face and manner inspired her with a sort of reverence. And she felt from that moment that the least wish expressed by his lips would be law to one who loved him.

He still sat at the piano, and often, in explanation of some remark, he sang a few notes. Then she recognized the voice she had heard in the morning. She was much puzzled by this coincidence, but dared not ask for an explanation.

After naming an hour for her lessons, he said, "I hope my practising at so early an hour in the morning does not disturb you."

"Why," inquired Constance, "do you live near? and was it you I heard singing this morning?"

"Yes," he replied, with a quiet smile, "I live very near, — in fact, in the same house, on the other side of the court. This old palace has been my home for five years."

As he was leaving the room Mrs. Tremaine entered. She could scarcely conceal her astonishment until Guido had closed the door, then she broke forth: —

"What a romance in real life! He is the singer at St. Peter's. I believe Mr. Carnegie knew it all the time, and only wished to surprise us. And he is even handsomer near than at a distance, and there is something so aristocratic and high-bred in his air. I am sure he is some ruined noble who is not too proud to earn his living honestly."

"He lives very near us," said Constance, with a slight blush, "in the other part of this house, across the court."

"In this very house! well, that *is* strange. You are fortunate, because your room is on the court, where you can always hear him sing. Now see how I am punished for my selfishness in taking the best room because it was on the street."

Constance laughed, and replied that she had always preferred the court, for the reason that it was more quiet than the street.

"Any way it is delightful," continued Helen, "because we shall see him often. I think," with a sly glance at Constance, "you will find music a delightful study with such an interesting master."

That evening while Filomena gave Guido his supper she talked incessantly of the two lovely girls. "The dark one is so sweet and gentle, and the fair one is so gay she is like a dancing sunbeam. But which dost thou think the fairest, *maestro mio?*"

Guido's eyes grew softer, and his smile more tender, as he replied, "The dark one."

CHAPTER XIX.

MRS. TREMAINE AND THE PRINCE CONTI.

MRS. TREMAINE had been to a reception at the French Ambassador's with Lady Charlotte Lennox, a friend of Mr. Carnegie. Constance sat up to wait for her, and when she came she was not at all tired, never had looked more bewitchingly lovely, and was perfectly wild with the excitement and triumph of the evening. The Prince Conti had been presented to her by the Ambassador, and he had danced with her twice, and paid her such marked attention that the American heiress had turned green with jealousy, and the old banker had immediately decided to add another hundred thousand to the proposed marriage settlements.

Indeed, as Constance afterward learned from Mr. Carnegie, Helen was the belle of the evening, and had attracted quite enough attention to turn a steadier head than hers. After he had recounted her triumphs with a sad face and nervous, uneasy manner, he added, as though to console himself, that he had just discovered a rare old collection of *majolica*, which he hoped to get possession of at a reasonable price.

The more Mrs. Tremaine danced and flirted and laughed, the more Mr. Carnegie poked into dusty, musty, old *bric-à-brac* shops, and explored out-of-the-way places from the Ghetto to the Babuino, in hopes to discover something *unique* to console him for the treasure he could not have. He began three different novels, and got as far as the third chapter; but all his characters had fair hair and large blue eyes,

and were, in fact, pen-portraits of sweet Helen Tremaine. He tried to paint; but the heads of the dark Roman models all bore the same features, and, in spite of himself, black hair became gold, the dusky olive brow white as a tender rose-leaf, the gaudy costume of the *campagna* a delicate blue robe, with long, graceful folds, and he had before him a faint outline of one of Fra Angelico's saints. It was of no use; the stream of his life was changed, and he could not make it flow back into its old channel. All that remained for him was to watch his idol, and wait.

And a new life had opened before Constance, — a soft, sunny, verdant vista, down which she looked with glad eyes and smiling lips. Her feet lingered lightly in the rose-strewn way, and she inhaled new odors that were not of earth. The trees were of a more tender green, and the boughs were filled with singing birds. There was music everywhere; there was music in her heart, and the soft air around her breathed music. She awoke to its sound, and she slept with that voice reverberating in her ears. For all the chambers of her heart were filled with a delicious melody. It was the birth of that experience which comes to us but once.

Let philosophers and sages say that love is a myth, or that the human heart is capable of more than one *grande passion*, and I affirm and maintain, on the evidence of every living soul that *has* loved, the reality of love, and the utter impossibility of loving more than once. All that has preceded, all that may come after, is but friendship; or, call it what you may, it is not the flame kindled by the divine spark that God has given to us as a sign of the immortality of our souls.

A year before Constance believed she had loved, but she had only felt that cold affection which so many poor mistaken creatures consider the heaven-born passion. She might have married Richard Vandeleur and gone through life happy and contented, because in all probability she never would have met the one being created to explain to her this mystery of love. She would have been comparatively happy, because she never would have missed what she had never known. But there would have been no strains of divine melody ringing like crystal bells to blend and harmonize the discords of life; no singing birds in all the green shade; no angel faces in the blue ether. No breath of paradise would have blown across her path, to stir the inmost depths of her soul with an ecstatic thrill, such as the free spirit feels when some blessed morning it beholds the glorious gates flung wide for its admission. Neither can I say, with the cold, keen philosophy of the dead heart, "Woe to that being on whom this knowledge dawns too late! Woe for the hunger and thirst of the soul that has once feasted at the heavenly banquet, for nothing after can satisfy its longing!" Is it better never to have drunk from the cup of Ganymede because we must thirst again? Is it better never to have had a glimpse of the rose-gardens of Eden because the gates are closed to us forever? I believe

> "'T is better to have loved and lost
> Than never to have loved at all."

But Constance did not know she loved this young singer. She did not pause to analyze her feelings. She only knew she was happy, happier than she had ever been in her life. Was it the blue sky, the balmy air, of Italy, the thousand beautiful things in nature and art that surrounded her? She did not know, she did not inquire; she only felt the lightness, the buoyancy, of a heart at rest.

Her musical studies were to her a source of never-ending delight. She practised indefatigably, following every gentle hint of her master, striving only for his approval, and quite contented if she saw that he was pleased with her efforts. Scarcely a day or an evening passed without her seeing him. Indeed, he had become at once a favorite with all. His noble face, his gentle, high-bred manners, the charm of his talent, and his pure simple nature, left their impression on all whom he encountered. Madame Landel loved him very soon with a motherly sort of affection; and even Mr. Carnegie, proud Englishman though he was, with all an Englishman's prejudices against Italians, found nothing to condemn in Guido. Mrs. Tremaine petted him much as one would a younger brother, demanded all sorts of little services of him, praised, scolded, or counselled him, as she felt in the humor. It was evident Guido liked her, and admired her, but with the same admiration one bestows on a lovely picture. Between him and Constance there was that grave but sweet reserve that marks the first stage of the tender passion. They did not converse much with each other, there were no light words of jesting banter between them; but often their eyes met for an instant, and in that instant how many revelations were made, how many secrets were betrayed that neither had acknowledged to themselves! They often sang together, — the pure, fresh voice of Constance mingling and harmonizing with the glorious tones of her master, sometimes in impassioned romances, but more frequently in the grand and solemn music of the Church. Guido had at last found one who thoroughly understood and sympathized with him in his love for his divine art; and this drew their souls nearer

together, and formed between them a perfect bond of union.

Often in the quiet of his own room, instead of writing late into the night, as had been his custom, Guido would sit with his arms folded, lost in deep thought. Sometimes his eyes would lose their sadness, and beam with the light of joy; a smile of tenderness would tremble on his lips, and he would seem transfigured for a moment by the power of this new experience. Then suddenly the light would fade away and gloom overspread his face; tears would dim his eyes, and he would murmur, with pale, compressed lips, "No, no, it is madness; I must not dream of that joy, it is not for such as I!"

Mrs. Tremaine was very gay and happy. Scarcely an evening passed that she was not the chief attraction of some fashionable circle. Lady Charlotte Lennox, who was always ready to chaperon a lovely young lady, found herself in demand; for Helen did not hesitate to make her friends useful, exacting all sorts of attention with a good-natured selfishness none could resist. Then Mr. Carnegie and Lady Charlotte were fast friends, and they went everywhere together, guarding between them the treasure, — one with pride, the other with love.

There was no one so popular that season as Helen. All the young Italian nobles coveted her slightest smile, would have fallen at her feet and worshipped her, would have died to gratify her lightest caprice, — or, at least, so they said in their anonymous billets and impassioned serenades; but she treated all with the same saucy scorn and indifference, except the Prince Conti. There were times, when he approached her, that she would have given worlds for the power to subdue the fluttering of her heart and control her rising color. All her other young adorers called her cold, heartless, beautiful, superb, but only a marble statue. The Prince Conti had seen the warm flush dye her lovely cheek, and felt the little hand tremble in his, and he knew he was the Pygmalion that was to inspire this lovely creation with the life of passion. It was evident he loved her. He hung upon her steps like a shadow; and Helen, — how could she resist him? Was he not a prince, and the Apollo of princes?

It was Helen's birthday; and there came among the dozens of bouquets one of rare flowers, and in the centre of a lily was fastened a small hoop of diamonds, on the inside of which was engraved the word "*Speranza.*" She turned very pale, and placed it without a word upon her finger; and long after, when those lovely hands were folded for their eternal rest, that ring still sparkled where she had placed it. Through the day all her young friends came with flowers and gifts to wish her *buona festa*, and among them the Prince Conti. Constance stood near Helen when he took her hand, and she thought she detected an expression of triumph when his eye fell upon the ring. He was as sure then, as in all that passed after, that she loved him. From that day he became a frequent visitor, and begged to be allowed to join them in their excursions and rides. He found the safest and fastest horses, and showed them the most delightful roads in the *campagna*, and he knew where were the most interesting ruins, and all the traditions and histories of them. Constance, Helen, Mr. Carnegie, and the Prince rode together, while often Lady Charlotte, Madame Landel, and Guido would accompany them in the carriage. These were delightful days to all the party, except poor Mr. Carnegie, who always rode with Constance, pale and silent, now and then casting furtive, wistful glances at Mrs. Tremaine, whose light, clear laugh was borne back to them by the breeze as she cantered joyously by the side of the Prince.

One morning they all set off, full of life and spirits, to visit the fountain of Egeria. When they reached the old ruined temple at the termination of the carriage-drive they dismounted, and, after lunching merrily under the shade of the Sacred Forest, started to walk across the valley of the Almo to the spot where tradition says that Numa held intercourse with his favorite nymph.

The morning had been delightful; but now, about midday, suddenly the sun clouded over, and a strange, hissing sound seemed to run along the earth, and the old trees behind waved their weird branches with a portentous solemnity. Mr. Carnegie glanced up at the darkening sky, and said, "We must hurry; there will be a heavy shower soon."

"I think not very soon," observed the Prince, who had just offered his arm to Mrs. Tremaine. "If we walk fast we shall have time to reach the fountain and return"; and off they started at a brisk rate, far in advance of the others.

Constance and Guido were walking together, while Mr. Carnegie was behind with the other ladies. She glanced at her companion more than once. He seemed sad and abstracted; his arms were folded, his long, black mantle floated behind him in the wind; his head was bare, for he carried his hat in his hand, saying he liked the cool air on his forehead. There was an expression on his face that she had never before seen, — a weary, troubled look, as of one who had waged a hard battle with self, and had been vanquished when he had most desired the victory.

"You are very sad and silent to-day," she said, after a few indifferent remarks; "this

scene of desolation and ruin depresses you."

"O no," he replied, with an eloquent glance, "I am not sad, I am too happy. I am always silent when I am most happy. Neither do I find it dreary here; there is a charm in this spot difficult to describe, and the dull gray sky and rising wind are in keeping with the scene. See yonder shepherd; he is calling his flock together, to seek a refuge from the threatening heavens. How plaintive is the sound of his pipe! it is like a wail that foretells the coming tempest. And I fear it will be upon *us* before we can reach a shelter."

She glanced back. Mr. Carnegie and the ladies had turned and were hastening to the Sacred Forest. Helen and the Prince were far ahead, utterly oblivious, in each other's society, of the storm about to break upon them.

"Let us remain here for a moment," said Guido, as they reached the foot of the hill on which stand th ruins of the temple of Bacchus. "Here in this shallow cave is a little shelter."

Even as he spoke the gust swept by them, and the great drops fell with a heavy patter on the dried earth at their feet. For a few moments the wind was fearful, and the place offered little protection against the fury of the elements. Guido glanced into the pale face at his side, and he saw her turn paler and tremble as a vivid flash of lightning shot by them, followed by a deafening crash of thunder. With a sudden impulse of tenderness he threw his mantle around her and drew her close to his heart. A moment of silent rapture, a moment of more than bliss, in which their souls knew each other and rushed together; though no word was spoken, though no vow passed their lips, yet the great secret that each had hidden from the other was revealed in all its strength and fervor. They loved each other, and henceforth their souls could never be separated, even though their bodies were parted forever; through all time, through all eternity, the immortal part would remain one.

This revelation burst with startling power upon the mind of Constance, as she rested for one moment against the heart that beat so tumultuously for her. Then, deadly pale, she disengaged herself from his embrace and turned away coldly and haughtily, saying, in a constrained voice, "The strength of the storm is passed, let us go on."

For a moment Guido looked at her like one stupefied; then a scornful, bitter expression passed over his face, but he said, gently and calmly, "Pardon me, *Signorina*, I meant but to shelter you from the storm. Yes, let us go on; the worst is over."

The rain still fell heavily, but after a few moments of hurried walking, during which neither spoke, they reached the grotto where Helen and the Prince had already arrived, wet and tempest-tossed, it is true, but chatting and laughing as merrily as ever.

"Here we will remain until the shower is entirely over," said Guido, as he folded his mantle and laid it on a wet stone to form a seat for Constance. "You are pale and tired from your rapid walk; sit here, and I will bring you some water to refresh you."

He gave her a cool draught in a little silver cup Mrs. Tremaine had brought to drink from; then he stood looking at her with a sad, dreary expression of mingled pain and disappointment. It told more than words could how deeply she had wounded him.

As she gave him back the cup, her eyes filled with tears, and she said softly, laying her hand upon his for a moment, "Forget what has passed; I, too, will forget it. Now tell me about this mysterious place."

The Prince was twining graceful maiden's-hair and ivy into a wreath for Helen, who had laid aside her hat and was arranging her dishevelled gold, which the wind had torn from its fastenings.

"I can believe this to have been the abode of all the nymphs since the Creation," she said. "It seems to be the very spot for the dwelling-place of the light-footed creatures. How lovely it must have been when the green moss of the spring was sprinkled with ambrosial drops that fell from the damp tresses of Egeria! and how strange to think that this same fountain sparkles and bubbles and runs over the margin into the basin among the maiden's-hair fern and wild ivy as it did in the irreclaimable days when gods and goddesses descended to hold intercourse with mortals! But then," she said, with an arch smile, "men were half gods, and all women were nymphs."

"And now," replied the Prince, with an ardent glance of admiration, "all men are mortal; and all women are angels, and much lovelier than these beings of an ideal creation."

"One might fancy," said Guido, pointing to the mutilated recumbent statue, "that some presuming mortal had dared to penetrate into the enchanted shade, and an indignant goddess had transformed him into this dumb marble."

"Very poetical, Signor Guido, but more poetical than real, as in all probability this romantic spot was nothing more than a bath where the lusty *contadini* came to lave their tired limbs after their day's toil in the neighboring fields."

"O," cried Constance, "how can you destroy our cherished illusions by such a commonplace explanation! The beauty and

seclusion of the spot make me desire to believe in the truth of the tradition."

"Pardon me," he said, "but would you teach me that fiction is better than truth? But see, the rain is over, and the wind has gone to rest like a tired child. Let us get to the horses before there is another shower."

Guido walked by the side of Constance, silent and grave, and she was too much absorbed in her own thoughts to make any effort to converse. The wind had fallen to rest, as the Prince said, like a tired child that had raged and moaned until its strength was spent, and now all was calm and still. That silence, almost stupor, had succeeded which is so suggestive of exhausted, worn-out passions.

They found the ladies sitting in the carriage, and Mr. Carnegie pacing back and forth with bowed head and moody face.

"Are you wet?" he inquired anxiously, as Mrs. Tremaine approached.

"A little," she replied, smiling, "but a sharp canter will set us all right"; and, scarcely touching the proffered hand of the Prince, she sprang into the saddle.

That evening Helen did not go out, and the Prince came, as he usually did when she was at home. They sat apart from the others, talking in low tones, while they turned over a book of drawings. Mr. Carnegie and Madame Landel sipped their tea in silence by the fire, and Constance and Guido were at the piano. In spite of the episode of the morning they both seemed happy, and Guido's face had recovered its usual serene expression. They sang, yet did not select the impassioned romances of Italy, but rather the noble compositions of Mozart and Beethoven, and parts of Cherubini's *Stabat Mater*, and the tender, exquisite *Ave Maria* of Cerissimi.

That night, after Constance went to her room, she walked the floor for long hours, searching into the depths of her heart with troubled earnestness, trying to decipher what was written there. One by one the words came out clear and distinct, and stood before her in letters of fire, and grew, and increased, and repeated themselves, but always in the same form, — "I love him, I love him."

And Guido, on his knees before the picture of the Madonna, his long black robes falling around him, with pale uplifted face and extended hands, looked like some suffering saint, imploring mercy from the Mother of God.

"Oh!" he moaned, "I love her, I love her, and I must tear her from my heart. She does not know what I am, she does not know the barrier of disgrace that separates us. Yes, I love her, but I must forget her or die!"

CHAPTER XX.

A USELESS QUEST.

IN a small, neatly furnished apartment on the Lung' Arno, in Florence, sat a gentleman deeply engaged in writing. It was Richard Vandeleur, but how changed from the Richard Vandeleur of Helmsford! His face was thin, almost haggard; his mouth had those downward curves of melancholy depression which tell so plainly of the deep thought and suffering that have marked a life; his eyes were sad but gentle, and his brow lined and contracted; his hair was thinner, and mixed around the temples with gray; his face was brown from exposure to the sun of Eastern deserts, and the lower part was entirely covered by a long grizzled beard. His whole dress betokened a carelessness of the world's opinion, an utter indifference to appearance; and yet he looked a gentleman in spite of all, but so weary and worn, so old and changed, that Constance, had she seen him, would scarcely have recognized him as the elegant man of fashion she had known a year and a half before. It is true he had lost some of his former almost effeminate refinement, but he had gained much in its stead. There was a certain earnestness and resolution in his expression that told he was no longer an idler, but a constant, unwearied actor in the great drama of life. A few months before, he had returned from the East, where he had sought in vain for happiness and forgetfulness. He had returned to the cities of Europe, to the same men, to the same places, to the same things he had left, still oppressed with the same hungering heart, the same unpeaceable soul, ever pursued by the thought of his lost years and the remorse that had so blighted his life. In almost every hour, in every place, the words of Constance still sounded in his ears: "Seek her throughout the world, and, if she still lives, make her what reparation is in your power." He had sought her, and, the more he sought, the more the memory of those days of wild sweet joy, when she had been all to him, entered and took possession of his heart; and the more he thought of her innocence and purity, her gentle nature, the more difficult he found it to believe that she had indeed sinned so deeply. Time and suffering had softened his heart, and taught him to be more merciful. There were hours when a suspicion, too horrible to be endured, would flash across his mind, — what if that man whom he had trusted had deceived him and the poor child he left in his charge? "I will seek for him," he would cry, in a paroxysm of rage, "I will find him and wring the truth from him, or I will shed his heart's blood." Then often to these

storms of passion would succeed a gloomy reaction, when he would reason coolly to himself in this wise: "If she had loved me and been true to me, nothing could have torn her from me. If she had been deceived and decoyed from the home where I left her, she knew my name, she could have found me. In all these years, if she were innocent and living, I should have heard from her. O, if I could but find her, and know I had been deceived, and she was the same sweet child I worshipped in those golden days of youth and love, life might still be something to me, I might yet be happy!"

This evening, as he sat alone in his room steadily writing, he was striving, as he always was now, to find distraction in labor, never in pleasure. For several weeks he had been wandering along the Adriatic coast, stopping in every small town and hamlet, searching by every means possible for some information concerning his earnest quest. He had visited again the scene of those happy hours; he had sat in the little garden, under the same orange-trees where, ten years before, the golden summer days had gone on like an idyl of Arcadia. And such a summer he had never known since, because he never again had the same fresh heart, the same faith and trust; and now, looking back through the dark and tangled vista of all the years, he could truly say, "Those were the blessed days of my life!" The cottage was empty and closed, but he readily gained permission to enter; the servant who had been in his employ was dead or gone, none knew which. He could learn nothing there; but still he wished to see once more the place so filled with sweet associations, — the little rooms where they had lived, day after day, in the closest of all the relations of life. He threw himself on his knees before the window where they had sat hour after hour; where she had stood so often by his side, her arm around his neck, her soft cheek resting on his hair, while he read or wrote; where she had knelt before him, gazing into his face with adoring eyes, calling him her angel, her saint, and every sweet endearing diminutive her lovely language possessees. There was the little niche in the wall, with the ill-painted Madonna, where she had insisted upon having a desk, with a candle and prayer-book, and a crucifix over it, before which she knelt night and morning in her loose white robes, her small brown hands clasped, her soft eyes uplifted to the image of the suffering Saviour, pleading for forgiveness, — she who had never then sinned.

O, how the remembrance of those scenes lacerated and tore the heart of the weary suffering man! for he had been the cause of the ruin of that angel of purity; he had left her unprotected to the snares of a villain. Where was she now? perhaps, cast off and forsaken, she had sunk lower and lower, until neither earth nor heaven had any refuge for her, and the fair face and glorious eyes might have been hidden for years in the darkness and dreariness of an unknown grave. Covering his face with his hands, he wept long and bitterly; then he arose and went away, like one who had taken the last look of an idolized being before the coffin-lid closed upon it forever. Again he walked on the mournful shores where, years before, in the first fury of his disappointed love, he had poured out his impotent rage and scorn to the unheeding sea. Now with a profound sadness he watched the continual succession of waves, that broke one after another on the smooth sand with a faint murmuring plaint like the moans of invisible sorrows. "Why do you complain and murmur forever," he thought, — "you who have the strength that nothing can resist? Even we who are human have no power against you. How like life! how like fate! We struggle madly, blindly, against our destinies, and yet the waves roll on and on, and we cannot stay them in their course, neither can we resist them."

O human hearts! groping like wounded worms in the dust, with a blind instinct of pain, why in your maimed and helpless aspirations do ye not look to the great Healer? His balm of Gilead, his balsam of life, would be so freely poured on your bleeding wounds.

Richard Vandelcur had not yet that faith in the unlimited power, in the unchangeable justice and goodness, of the Father who pities us in our weakness and folly, — that faith which leads us to higher and nobler ends, — that faith without which our lives are but the most deplorable of all deceptions; still he was blindly groping in the darkness, with his hands before his face, toward the great light, which, if it once beams upon our souls, drives away forever the shadows of doubt and despair.

Many and varied were the thoughts that passed through his mind in quick succession, as he stood looking out on the sea, over which hung a dull gray sky. Earth and heaven seemed veiled alike in a cold neutral tint, and always distinct from the confusion of thought sounded those words, "Reparation, reparation" The waves that broke at his feet seemed to demand it; the wind that waved the boughs of a dreary willow and moaned among the branches of a pine against which he leaned, the seabirds with slow circles and plaintive cries, took up the refrain and repeated it over and over. The memory of a pair of dark tender eyes dimmed with tears, a face glorious with youth and beauty, quivering lips, and

clinging hands was eloquent with the same prayer.

Then a solemn phantom seemed to pass before him, with hollow eyes, in which the fires of life and passion were forever extinguished, — a face white and worn, lips on which no smile rested, mournful folded hands over an immobile breast, — a ghastly contrast to that incarnation of warm, fresh, living loveliness he had known. And that phantom seemed to cry louder and more imperatively than all the voices of nature, "Reparation! reparation!"

"O my God!" he cried, "I have striven, and I will still strive. I will give myself neither peace nor rest until I know something of her fate."

And so he had gone on through every city and town of Italy, often discouraged, often hopeless, but still ever seeking, even when he felt it was a useless quest.

He had returned to Florence after this weary search, worn out in body and mind, yet resolved to leave immediately for Paris, hoping there to find some clew to the whereabouts of De Villiers. That seemed to be the only resource left, and he determined to act upon it at once.

But at that time a malignant fever had been raging among the poor, in a squalid, dirty part of the city, where few foreigners dared penetrate. "Here," he thought, "is something for me to do, by which I may make some atonement for the past." And so for several weeks, instead of starting on his intended journey, he had been going the rounds of the infected district, a very angel of mercy. He had freely given food and money, and procured the best medical advice. He had watched day after day and night after night by the bed of the dying, giving them the cooling draught, moistening the parched lips, and often closing with his own hands the eyes that had ceased to weep. In all the abodes of misery the pale solemn face, the sad but kind eyes, the gentle voice, were known and welcomed. But now the crisis of the epidemic had passed, already there was a change for the better, and again he decided to leave. This evening, after writing for some time, he started up suddenly and laid down his pen, as though some new resolution had taken possession of him.

"Have I been insane that I have never thought of this before? Yes, I will go at once to Rome, I will seek for her father and mother; she may have returned to them, — what is more likely? — or at least, if she has not returned, they may know something of her fate. Yes, I will leave in the morning. Now I must go to see my sick; I must know they are provided for during my absence."

He took a basket from a closet, filled with wine and fruit, and, opening his desk, drew from a roll a number of small bills in paper; these he put into his pocket-book, and, taking his basket and cane, started on his errand of mercy. Leaving behind him the broad, brilliantly lighted Lung' Arno, he crossed the Ponte Vecchio, and entered the dark, dreary suburbs. Passing through a narrow, dirty street, he saw a wounded dog lying on the pavement, howling piteously. Stooping down, he took the dirty little animal in his arms, and carried it to a butcher's stall near; on examining it, he found its hind legs were broken. "Poor thing!" he said, with genuine pity in his voice, as he put some money into the man's hand, "take care of it until it is well. Mind you take care of it, and feed it! if not, I shall know how to treat you when I see you again." The man promised readily, but at the same time looked with bewildered astonishment at this eccentric person, who could care for the sufferings of a dog; and as he went out, the butcher muttered to himself, "Ah, this must be the *forestiere* who has been so good to the sick. May the Madonna and all the saints bless him!"

On he went from one house to another, speaking words of kindness and encouragement, giving money, wine, or bread, as they were needed. In one room of a distressingly miserable place was a little girl of eight or nine years, who had been, with her old grandmother, just to the verge of the grave, but both had now turned back to tread a little longer the paths of life, — one with the trembling feet of age, the other with the unheeding steps of childhood. He loved this dark-eyed child; she was very patient and docile, and he had seen her often during her illness. Now he leaned over the miserable bed, and said gently, "*Angela mia*, I am going away for a few days. I have come to say *addio*, and you must be quite well when I return."

The child threw her thin arms around his neck, and, drawing his bearded face close to hers, she murmured, "O *caro Signore*, I love you, and I will pray to the blessed Madonna to bring you back quickly."

The tears filled his eyes and fell on her pale cheek as he stooped to kiss her; then he turned away, to continue his work of mercy far into the night.

When he reached his room he threw himself into an arm-chair weary and exhausted, yet feeling he had done a little to lighten his own burden, as well as that of others.

And this was Richard Vandeleur, the fastidious man of the world, the gay idler in the haunts of fashion and vice, the scoffer, the sceptic, who had years before ceased to believe in the purity of any motive that influenced the heart.

That night he had carried a wounded

dirty animal in his arms from pity, and had wept over the sick-bed of a pauper.

CHAPTER XXI.

AM I WORTHY TO BE YOUR FRIEND?

THERE was a great *festa* in St. John Lateran, at Rome, that beautiful basilica which stands like a sentinel before the gates, and whose marble Christ and ten Apostles seem to keep watch and ward over the great city, wide *campagna*, and distant mountains.

This day, over all the long flight of steps and at all the entrances were strewn the odorous box and bay, and all the doors were hung with fluttering silk curtains bordered with gold, and around all the massive pillars were twined and interlaced festoons of crimson and white. Thousands of candles burned before the altars, and flowers loaded the air with perfume. Crowds were passing in, from the magnificent Roman princes, with their liveried lackeys, to the poorest *contadini*, — all received alike in the temple of God.

The mass of people swayed back and forth as the guards made way for the procession of cardinals, bishops, priests, and then the Pope, with his gorgeous retinue. Guido sang, and every one crowded to hear him. In fact, he went, like the beloved Raphael in other days, followed by his throng of imitators and admirers. All the young musicians loved him and copied him; he was now far above those who had envied him in the early days of his career. So friend and foe bowed alike at the shrine where the world worshipped.

He sang, with all the pathos of his wonderful voice, that touching prayer, —

> "Signor, pietà! se a te giunge il mio pregar
> Non mi punisca il tuo rigor."

And he sang with the same power that, nearly two hundred years before, had softened the hearts and changed the purpose of the assassins who had entered that sacred edifice to take the life of the unfortunate Stradella. Even as the crowd were then ready to fall down and worship that ill-fated young singer, so now was the great mass of people filled with the same enthusiastic delight at Guido's marvellous execution.

Constance sat near the choir with her friends, who freely expressed their admiration; but she said nothing. Her face was unusually pale, and her eyes had a solemn expression, blended with adoration, as she gazed at the noble form of the young singer. Sometimes Guido's eyes would meet hers for a moment, and express all his gratitude and joy at her evident appreciation.

It was through music their souls held intercourse and comprehended each other; consequently the moments she listened to his voice were the happiest of her life.

Before one of the altars, surrounded by several nuns, knelt Sister Agatha, rapt in a sort of trance as she listened to Guido's voice and at the same time looked on the pictured Christ in the last agony of his mortal struggle. She was paler, older, and more worn, but still the same placid face beamed under the stiff white cap and black serge veil. She was no longer in the *camera della rota* at Santo Spirito, for when the sisterhood of the *Sacré Cœur* established their convent in the Villa Lanti, the position of mother assistant had been given her, — a more honorable position than that which she held at Santo Spirito, but often she longed for the old wards, and the baby faces, and the warm little living hands that strayed over her face and clung around her neck. She had a woman's heart, this poor nun; and her life there afforded her some outlet for the tender feelings, that cannot be turned inward to feed upon self, or even be given all to God. Her life now was colder, more austere, more dignified, but less satisfactory. She still loved Guido with the same deep affection, which she never could quite understand. In spite of all her prayers to the Madonna to remove it from her heart if it were unlawful, it still flourished as green and fresh as on the night when he first smiled in her face under the shadow of Santo Spirito. For the *Santa Madre* was a woman and loved her dear son, and wept, and fainted at the cross, as any earthly mother would have done to see her dear child suffering the agonies of death. And Sister Agatha loved Guido as a child, and so the dear Madonna did not wither or crush this affection, but left it to grow, and blossom, and bring forth fruit.

And Filomena was there listening, with all her heart in her eyes, to the divine voice of *il caro maestro*. She was no longer the poor dejected creature who had brought him under her shawl back to Santo Spirito, weeping bitterly because she was too poor to keep him. Now she was well dressed and healthy, and if it had not been for the red stain on her cheek she would not have been ill-looking. As it was, she had the air of one well satisfied with the world; but, if you examined her face more closely, there was an expression which told plainly that she was not altogether satisfied with herself.

Near her stood a tall, bearded man, who scarcely removed his eyes from her, and, whichever way she turned, he too turned in the same direction, as if to keep her always in sight.

When the service was finished and the people passed out, he followed close

behind her, until they gained the *piazza*, where the crowd was not so dense; then he advanced to her side, and said, in a voice slightly tremulous, "Your name is Filomena, is it not?"

"Yes," she replied, starting and turning pale; "but why do you wish to know?"

"I have something to say to you; when and where can I see you?"

"To-night, at my house, if you wish"; and she added the street and number.

"Very well," he said, "I will be there at seven"; and, without adding another word, he turned away.

"He brings me some news of my child, my Mona," said the poor mother, following him with her eyes. "O, if God has but put it into her heart to acknowledge her poor parents, it will be a happy day for my Benedetto and me! I am sure if she could see us, how our condition is changed, she would be no longer ashamed of us. But *chi sa?* perhaps it is the good news he has come to bring us."

At seven o'clock, punctually, some one rang. Filomena opened the door, and there stood the stranger. She invited him into her little room, closed the door, offered him a seat, and then stood before him, tremblingly, waiting for him to speak.

"Do you not know me?" he said, after a moment's pause, stroking his beard slowly, and looking her steadily in the face.

"No, no," — with a puzzled air, returning his penetrating gaze, — "and yet your eyes are familiar. But *O Signor mio!*" she cried, clasping her hands, "tell me if you have any news of my child."

A sudden pallor passed over his face, and then he said, "Do you remember the *Signore Inglese*, who lived ten years ago in the palace where your husband was porter?"

"*O Dio mio!* I do remember him. He it was who robbed us of our child, curses on him!"

"Hush! hush! I am he; it was I who took her from you; and now I am come to you to learn something of her."

"You?" she cried, starting back. "Never! never! But where is my child?" and the woman advanced toward him and shook her clenched hand menacingly in his face, while her black eyes and the crimson stain on her cheek burned like fire. "Tell me quickly, — tell me what have you done with my child? Where is she?"

"I do not know," he said, taking her hands and forcing her gently into a chair. "Be calm, I implore you; I have much to say to you; be calm, and listen to me."

"You, the villain who has robbed me of my only child! — you tell me to be calm. Ah, you do not know a mother's heart. I will have your life's blood if you do not bring back my child."

"O, hush! I beseech you! If you will not listen to me, I can do nothing," he said, in a sad, discouraged voice. "It is true, I deserve all your reproaches, all your indignation and anger; but that cannot undo what has been done. I wish now to make all the reparation in my power, if it is not too late. Listen, while I tell you all, and then, perhaps, you may pity me."

His humble, sad voice touched the not unfeeling heart of the woman, and seemed to subdue her fury. She buried her face in her hands, and waited in silence for him to begin.

Then he told her all, from the hour of the false marriage to the last effort he had made at Pescara, a few weeks before. She often interrupted him during the recital with cries of anger, indignation, and sorrow, and exclamations of "*O figlia mia!* mingled with sobs and curses on her seducer.

"And you have heard nothing from her?" he inquired, wistfully, when he had finished.

"Nothing! she has been dead to us since the night she left us. Shortly after, we received a large sum of money, and since, at different times, smaller amounts; so we knew it must come from our child; and we thought she was rich and happy, but did not wish to come back because she was ashamed of her poor, ignorant parents."

"I sent the money," he said; "first at her suggestion, and after because I wished in some way to atone for my sin. Did you think she had married the man she had fled with?"

"Certainly. I who knew the pure, innocent heart of my child, and the strength of her virtue, knew, also, that nothing would induce her to listen to any other proposal; and you, who had had the greatest proof of her purity, how could you doubt her because one whom you knew to be a villain deceived you? O man, blind, stupid, have you not yet learned to know that there has been some fearful wrong in all this? My child was innocent; I know it as well as though she told me so before the face of the Madonna. That bad man in whose care you left her has deceived you and wrought the ruin of both!" and, covering her face, she rocked to and fro as though a mighty wind had passed over her, always moaning, "O my poor child, you are lost to me forever! I know that nothing but death could keep you from your mother's heart!"

"Patience, patience, my poor friend!" he said, gently taking her trembling hands in his; "let us still seek her, trusting in God to aid us, and if we find her, and she is free, she shall be my wife, honored and beloved, and you may yet be happy with your child. I cannot think she is dead; neither can I now believe she is with that man. O,

I had hoped that in all these years you might have heard something from her!"

"I will seek for her myself," said Filomena; "the heart of a mother will lead me to her. Yes, to-morrow I will begin my search, and I will not rest until I find her. I forgive you," she said, laying her hand heavily on his shoulder, — "I forgive you, but on the condition that if I discover my child, and she is free, you will at once make her your wife."

"I swear it," he said, starting up, with a new light in his eyes; "the hour I can make that reparation will be my first hour of true peace since I committed that crime."

"We all have sinned," said the woman, and a strange expression passed over her face; "and every sin brings its punishment, but every sin is not a crime. For this, no reparation can be too great."

"It is true; your words are just, and I deserve your bitterest reproaches; but all that human power can do I will do to atone for this great wrong. You know how I have sinned; but God only knows how I have suffered."

The woman's face softened, and she said gently, "*Pazienza*, and we will hope for the best."

Richard Vandeleur arose, and, taking a roll of bank-notes from his pocket, he laid them on the table with a card, saying, "Use this in your search, and spare no expense. I shall leave here directly for Paris, where I hope to learn something of De Villiers. Here is my address; if you have anything to communicate, write to me at once."

He opened the door to go, when the voice of some one singing in an adjoining room fell upon his ear; he started, turned pale, and inquired almost breathlessly who it was.

"It is a young English lady, the Signorina Wilbreham," replied Filomena.

Without a word he stepped toward the door. It was ajar, and he entered. Constance was alone in the *salon*, and at the piano. When she saw this tall, bearded man in the door, she arose, and came forward to know his wishes. Suddenly she stopped, arrested by his eyes, whose expression she always remembered. She leaned with one hand on the back of a chair, and, holding out the other, said, calmly, "This is a surprise, Mr. Vandeleur, but you are nevertheless welcome."

"Thank you," he replied; "I heard your voice, and I could not resist the desire to speak with you."

"I am very glad to have the opportunity." She spoke calmly and truthfully. She could meet this man without emotion, whom she had parted from but a year and a half before nearly broken-hearted. "I thought you were in the East," she continued.

"I returned some months ago." And then, sitting down by her side, as an old friend after a long parting, he recounted to her all his wanderings, his useless quest, his bitter disappointment at the interview with Filomena, and his resolves for the future. Then, holding out his hand, he said, with a grave smile, "And now am I worthy to be your friend?"

She took the proffered hand in both hers, and, looking into his eyes that beamed with calm friendship, she replied, "Yes, yes, and this is the most satisfactory moment of my life. I have thought of you, and prayed for you, that you might see your duty and perform it; and in the trying are you not happier? Do you not find that your abnegation of self is bringing its reward."

"In a measure," he replied solemnly; "but I can know no real peace until I have made some reparation."

"You are doing all you can. God is merciful; he will accept the ardent desire for the fulfilment. Trust in him, and the peace will come in his own time."

"And you," he inquired, looking earnestly into her face, — "are you happy?"

"Ah, yes! as happy as I can be without my dear father. You, who knew him, can understand what I have lost." She spoke of his death with tearful eyes, then of her new home, her different pursuits, her various engagements, but never a word of that episode in their lives, the strange discovery on that dull September day, that had led to such unexpected results. Then they had parted with bleeding hearts, each to take up separately the burden of life which they had thought to bear together; neither daring to pray to see again the face of the other, only feeling a strong conviction that they must put distance between them, and leave to Time, the great healer, to cure the wounds that Fate had made.

Scarcely a year and a half had passed, and they had met, but not as either expected, in a foreign land, each with a separate purpose in their lives.

O, how inscrutable is the destiny that ever goes before us with veiled face! It is well for us that the veil is never drawn aside, for what is hidden is not to be revealed until our journey is done and the shadows fall behind.

When Madame Landel entered the *salon*, she could scarcely conceal her surprise at finding Mr. Vandeleur and Constance sitting side by side, and talking as calmly as friends who had met after a day's parting.

"I find you so much changed I hardly recognized you," she said, after a rather troubled greeting.

"Yes, I am changed," he replied, a little sadly. "Exposure to burning Eastern suns and desert life does not improve one's looks."

After a few remarks on indifferent matters he arose to take leave, saying he must start for Florence in the ten o'clock train.

"Then you do not remain in Rome," exclaimed Madame Landel, with some surprise in her voice.

No, I have work that calls me away. I am no longer an idler," he said, with a sad smile, as he shook hands. "You may see me again later in the season."

Constance looked after him, as he left the room, with a mournful presentiment that she should see him no more as then. Her thoughts were prophetic. Poor heart! Noble to the last, he found peace, but only when the wing of the white angel had waved over him.

CHAPTER XXII.

WAS IT POVERTY OR SHAME?

THE next morning after her interview with Mr. Vandeleur, Filomena entered the room of Guido. Her face was very pale, and her eyes red and swollen from a sleepless night and almost constant weeping.

Guido was writing, but he started up, and, giving her a chair, inquired anxiously the cause of her trouble. He had always felt for the woman a sort of affection and respect, and had ever listened patiently to the recital of every sorrow or annoyance, advising and sympathizing with her in the most tender manner. Indeed, she looked upon him as an oracle, and whatever he suggested she immediately acted upon, believing implicitly it was best in every way.

This morning, before beginning her story, she began sobbing; so it was necessary to use all sorts of gentle words to calm and console her. After the first burst of passionate grief she became more quiet, and recited intelligibly all the details of her interview with Mr. Vandeleur.

Guido could not refrain from expressing his deep indignation at the great wrong that had been practised upon the innocent girl, and his real grief at her uncertain fate. He had grown, like her parents, to think of her as the wife of the rich Englishman, living somewhere in luxury, happy and respected. And now this news changed all. If the poor wanderer were still alive, where was she, and in what position?

"Yes," he said, after a few moments' deep thought, — "yes, she must be found, and you are the one to seek for her. Begin at once, and my prayers and best wishes go with you. If you need me, you have but to say so, and I am ready to assist you in any way possible. And this cruel, base Englishman, can God let him go unpunished?" Guido's cheek flushed, and the old fire of San Michele shot from his eyes. "Curse him! If I could name his expiation, it should be bitter to endure."

"Hush, *figlio mio!*" said Filomena. "He has been punished by much suffering. Remorse and regret are stamped on every line of his worn face. I, her mother, pitied him so that I could not find it in my heart to curse him when I had heard his story. And he loves her, he loves her yet; after all these years, he pines to look upon her face."

"Enough," said Guido. "If he has suffered, I forgive him. I, also, pity every one that suffers." Then he gave her many directions in regard to her search, counselled and encouraged her, telling her to let him know from time to time of her progress, and, bidding her "God speed," they parted.

After she had gone, he sat long in an attitude of deep dejection and painful thought. His face was pale and worn, his eyes heavy and sad; in fact, his whole appearance betokened a fierce mental struggle. Since the day of the visit to the fountain of Egeria, nearly a month before, he had been miserable. He saw at once that all his future happiness depended upon his driving this passion from his heart. It must be done with a firm, unflinching will. He believed he had strength to do it. But he had not yet learned the power of love. Before he had known Constance he had been comparatively contented with his lot, happy in his devotion to his beloved art, and believing life had nothing more in store for him than the every-day duties that devolved upon him. He had thought little of love, and never dreamed of marriage, because he had never loved. And he had never loved, because the being to call forth that passion in the pure, devout heart of the young man had never until then crossed his path. Now an uncontrollable fate had brought them together. Their souls, created for each other, had recognized the truth, and demanded imperatively that union of all others the holiest. But Guido dared not tell his love, because the barriers that separated them seemed to him impassable. First, his situation in the service of the Pope was held under vows of celibacy. If he married, he must renounce it. Then his poverty, and, more insurmountable than all, his obscure birth, and the evident dishonor attached to it. All this he understood and felt as he never had before; and the more he thought, the more he felt how impossible it was that Constance could return his love. And if she could, would not her pride revolt against such a union? For hours in the

silence of the night, and during the occupations of the day, he brooded over these difficulties until his spirits and health were seriously affected. Then, sometimes, he would think, almost joyfully, if this mystery attending his birth could be explained the other obstacles might be surmounted. For something in his heart told him this girl loved him, and when she loved, no worldly interest could keep her from the man to whom she had given her heart. "For her," he thought, "I could resign my much coveted position, could leave my dear Italy, and make for myself an honorable career in some other land; and then I could ask her to share my lot. If I could but penetrate this mystery, and know at least that I was not the fruit of sin. But O, it is impossible! I have no means, no power, to bring to light this secret hidden by time and silence."

One day Sister Agatha sat alone in her little private room in the convent of the *Sacré Cœur*. She looked sad and old, but placid and patient. Before her, on a table, were a number of papers, which she was busily assorting and arranging. There was a knock at the door, and Guido entered. Throwing his broad-brimmed hat on a chair with a gesture of irritation and impatience, altogether unlike his gentle manner, he fell on his knees before the nun, and, burying his face in his hands, he cried out in sharp, passionate tones, "*O madre mia*, I am so miserable! I cannot endure this suffering any longer; I am come to thee for consolation."

Sister Agatha gently drew his hands from his face, and, pushing back the soft hair from his forehead, she looked long and anxiously into his eyes, saying all the while, "*Guido mio*, thou must not forget that I am human, and can do very little for thee; I love thee and pity thee, but it is to the Mother of God, the Blessed Virgin, thou must carry thy sorrow. Remember, my child, that it is she alone who, by her merciful intercession, can aid thee."

"Ah! I know that, my mother, I know all that; but this sorrow is something religion cannot cure," he replied, with more irreverence in his voice than she had ever heard before.

She looked surprised, and somewhat grieved, but she continued gently, nevertheless, "My Guido knows it is only the Madonna who can help him; but tell me thy trouble, and I will pray to our Blessed Lady for thee."

Then Guido, with bowed head and softened voice, told her of his love for Constance, its hopelessness, and his despair.

"Poor boy!" she said tenderly, when he had finished, "I pity thee; but thou must have patience, and if she loves thee she will ignore these circumstances that separate thee from her. Perhaps I should say to thee that love and marriage are not thy highest calling, that thy life should be entirely consecrated to God and the Holy Mother; but I cannot, no, I cannot. If thou lovest with the true and pure love that comes from God, it is thy vocation to accept it. The holy passion that he hath given thee should not be chilled or crushed. And if it is meant only for discipline, it is because thou hast need of it, and he will in time remove thy idol and gently draw thy suffering heart to him, to teach thee with pain and chastening that his love is better than earthly passion. My Guido must look at it in this way, and then whatever comes will be best."

Tears dimmed the soft eyes of the nun; for the memory of her youth returned strong upon her, — her girlish passion for her dark-eyed lover; those eyes that were so soon dimmed in death; that smile of infinite sweetness that even now, after all these years, sometimes came between her and her prayers; her wild agony when they were parted; her despair, her hopelessness; her renunciation of the world, to enter her living tomb; the weeks, months, and years of struggling to tear his memory from her heart, that she might give it all to God, bleeding and lacerated though it was.

Guido remained lost in thought for a few moments, and then, clasping his hands, while the tears fell from his eyes, he cried, "No, no, I cannot be resigned to lose her. I have never but half lived until she smiled upon me. If I must be separated from her forever, life is finished for me. Henceforth there is nothing but darkness and despair." The nun clasped his hands in hers, and pressed her pale lips to them without a word. What more could she say?

"But, my mother," continued Guido, with eagerness in his voice, "is there no way I can fathom the mystery that envelopes my birth? If I could but know I was abandoned from poverty, and not shame, I would not fear to ask for her love. Tell me what you believe; was it poverty or shame?"

"It was not poverty, my Guido," replied the nun, in a low voice. "I am sure you came of gentle parents. Look!" And, opening a drawer in a cabinet, she took therefrom a bundle of baby-linen, on which was fastened a card bearing the number 36, and the date October 23. The linen was of the most costly fabric, trimmed with delicate lace and embroidery. "Look," she said, "these were upon thee when they brought thee to Santo Spirito. A child of poverty could not be swathed in such fine linen."

"Then," cried the young man, with a

groan of agony, "it could only have been shame that caused the concealment of my birth. It is useless; we are separated forever; I cannot struggle against the destiny that overwhelms me. I must keep silent, I must never tell her of my love; and then what is there in life for me? Nothing. My art has lost the power to console me, my religion — ah! she is my idol, my saint; when I count my rosary and repeat my paternosters, her face comes between me and the Madonna."

"Guido," said the nun, sternly, "thy words are almost blasphemy. Go to the nearest church, and there on your knees before the image of the suffering Christ, pray for pardon. Remember we are not children whom the blessed Lord bribes to goodness by the promise of some desired object. Be good and patient first, and the Madonna will intercede for thee, that thy reward may be given thee."

Guido took the nun's hand, and pressing it reverently to his lips, and murmuring some half-inaudible promises of penitence and prayer, he went away with bowed head and gloomy brow, like the poor wretches who left the chamber of the Council of Ten to cross the Bridge of Sighs to the prison of condemnation; for to him hope had fled, the death-warrant to his happiness had been signed, and was he not doomed to a greater suffering than the axe of the executioner or the rest and forgetfulness of the grave?

—♦—

CHAPTER XXIII.

LET ME LIVE IN THE PRESENT.

ONE evening, Constance and Mrs. Tremaine sat by the drawing-room fire, chatting on all sorts of subjects. The Prince and Mr. Carnegie had just left, and Madame Landel had gone to her room with a headache.

Helen had been in the most brilliant flow of spirits all the evening. She had sung, laughed, and talked with increasing vivacity, while both the Prince and Mr. Carnegie had been unusually sad and abstracted.

To Constance, Helen was an enigma which she in vain tried to solve. And now, as she leaned back in an arm-chair, her golden hair pushed away from her forehead, her feet on the fender, and her arms lazily folded, her gayety seemed in no whit to abate. Her eyes sparkled, and the red spot burned on her cheek with an almost feverish brightness. Was she acting a part? I do not know, I cannot declare; but from what occurred afterwards, one might say she was.

"I wonder why Signor Guido never comes now in the evening," she said. "You know there was a time he came nearly always, and now I never see him, except when I steal in at the end of your lessons. And then he looks so pale and melancholy, — he certainly is quite changed these few weeks past. I think he must be in love with one of us, and is determined to keep out of temptation. I wonder which it is, for I am sure he is in love; I never mistake the signs. I think it must be you, dear, for I am certain I never would suit him, I am much too wicked."

Constance colored a little, but laughed and said, "I think he is too wise to fall in love with either of us, and besides you forget he is quite the same as a priest." And then, to change the subject, "But what was the matter with the Prince to-night? He certainly seemed quite depressed, — an unusual thing for him."

"Did he, indeed? I did not observe it," replied Helen. "I suppose his affairs are not in a very prosperous condition. Lady Charlotte told me to-day that he had offered his most valuable picture for sale, a splendid Giorgione. Fancy a prince so poor that he is obliged to sell his family pictures!"

"Helen, you will not be displeased if I ask you a question?" said Constance, after a few moments' thought.

"No, indeed; ask as many as you wish, only don't lecture.

"Do you love the Prince? Because you know, dear, he must marry an heiress, and is it right to go on in this way if you can never be his wife?" Constance sat on a low ottoman at her friend's side, and as she spoke she took one of the white hands and pressed it gently to her cheek, looking earnestly into the inscrutable blue eyes, bent in mock gravity upon her. "Tell me, do you love the Prince?"

"I love him? yes, certainly; but I suppose I have loved twenty others in the same way. How can I tell whether this is the divine passion or not?"

"O Helen! do not speak lightly of this; I am sure we love but once."

"Nonsense, moonshine, stuff! we love as often as we meet any one *simpatico*, as the Italians say. Why, only fancy, — vulgar little wretch that I was! — when I was twelve years old I was madly in love with the butcher's boy, — an urchin a little older than myself, *so* fat, with rosy cheeks, curly hair, and black eyes. And how do you think this graceful creature expressed the first budding of the tender passion? Why, by bringing me pigs' tails, which the cook secretly roasted for me in the ashes; and I can assure you it was food fit for the gods, for at that period I was always hungry. One day mamma entered the kitchen unawares, and caught him surreptitiously slipping a fine large pig's tail into my apron, which he had stolen from his master as a love-offering to me. My surprise

and confusion were terrible when mamma, with a not very gentle shake, ordered me to the nursery, threw the delicious morsel into the sink, exclaiming 'Nasty thing!' and told the butcher's boy never to show his rosy visage on her premises again. Would you believe it! I cried for several days and nights for the loss of my dark-eyed cherub, or the savory pigs' tails, — I don't remember which."

Constance could not refrain from laughing a little, but she said very gravely, "Dear Helen, don't turn this subject into ridicule. I am sure you do not mean what you say."

"I quite mean it," she replied, smiling mischievously. "My own experience teaches me the instability of the tender passion. And then how one's taste changes! My first love was fat and rosy. Then there succeeded a liking for pale slim lads with long hair, — lawyers' clerks and apothecaries' apprentices. When I was sixteen nothing pleased me but fast, *distingué* young men, who sported gold chains, diamond studs, and eye-glasses, — who simpered and bowed and grinned, and twisted their mustaches. Then a little later, I thought all middle-aged men divine; those who wore mourning hat-bands and black gloves, — scholarly-looking, melancholy individuals, whom I always fancied to be poets that the world did not appreciate. I doted on gray hair, and grizzled beard, and declared I would rather be an old man's darling than the remainder of the proverb. Now that I have arrived at the age of discretion, with all these experiences to teach me, how can I believe in the stability of love?"

"Then you have never loved, dear," said Constance, softly, and with a slight blush. "If you had, you would know that all the preferences of which you have spoken are nothing but a girl's foolish fancies. But I believe the experience must come to us all once in a life. If you have escaped, it will come later, and then you will believe what I say to be true; but, Helen, if you do not love the Prince, is it right to show such a decided preference for his society? One can see his heart is all yours; how can you trifle with him so?"

"Trifle with him!" she exclaimed, with a sudden burst of emotion, covering her face with her hands, — "trifle with him! Good Heavens! cannot you see how madly, how entirely, I love him?"

"Hush, dear," said Constance, tenderly, "let us talk of this calmly. I have always believed you loved him, but your own words contradicted your actions. Do you understand each other? Does he know you love him?"

"Certainly he knows it, and he also knows how hopeless our future is, poor darling! It is for that he is so sad, it is for that he is almost in despair."

"Why," said Constance, "when you have known from the first the utter hopelessness of this love, — why have you encouraged it? and is it not better now to break off at once all intercourse, and try by every means possible to forget him?"

"To forget him! Never! If forgetting him would save me from years of torment, I would not forget him for one moment; neither will I separate myself from him one hour sooner than is absolutely necessary. No, no, do not preach. Let me live in the present; there is no future for me; all that will come after can be nothing but a desolate blank. The only joy that can vivify it will be the remembrance of these hours you so coolly advise me to give up. I know we must part, and part forever. I know it well. I have known it from the moment we first met; yet I would rather give twenty years of my life than never to have seen him, or than to lose one hour of the present." She spoke very calmly now, and her eyes were dimmed with tears and tender sadness. "Yes, I have been happy; I have known the bliss of loving and being loved. What does it matter if we lose a few years of the future? We shall meet, and live, I trust, forever in eternity. I think God permits us to carry with us to paradise some sweet memory of earth, to show us what Eden was before the fall. This precious memory will be mine. I cannot expect a lifetime of such bliss. It is not allowed to mortals. In a few weeks I have enjoyed more of happiness than is given to most lives; therefore, darling, I cannot complain. It is best as it is; we have met and loved, and we must part; the future," — a light shiver passed over her, and she turned deadly pale, — "it may be dreary, but it cannot be long. I know it cannot be long. Prisoners die sometimes for need of light. It will be so with me. I cannot live in darkness. But I shall be contented if I may die in his arms, and be the first to welcome him to eternal love."

"Forgive me, dear," said Constance, with tearful eyes, — "forgive me; for I have not understood you. I have not known how good and patient you are. But why, if you love each other with such fervor and strength, is it imperative that you should part? What does it matter if you are not rich? You can be happy together if the Prince does not regain the palaces of his ancestors. Do not speak so sadly; I am sure all will yet be well."

"No, no, dear," gently laying her fingers on the lips of Constance, "you must not speak of it. I shall never be his wife; it cannot be. I shall always love him, and that will be enough for me. But let me live

in the present; God will take care of the future. It is one o'clock," she said, looking at her watch, "we must go to bed; indeed, I am very happy with his love and your friendship and sympathy, and I cannot be altogether miserable." Then, smiling half sadly and half sweetly, she said "good night," and, taking her candle, left the room.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE RETREAT OF A SUFFERING HEART.

GUIDO had invited them all to accompany him to Sant' Onofrio, the retreat of the heart-broken Tasso, when, weary of the world and its injustice, mourning for the loss of his beloved Leonora, ill in body and mind, he entered to leave no more the place he had chosen of all others in which to pass peacefully the remainder of his sad life.

They first visited the church, and looked upon the tomb where rests all that was mortal of the great poet. Under a gorgeous monument, above which his statue, with youthful, earnest face, ever looks up, as if seeking Divine inspiration, lies the heart that so longed for the rest of death. The weary, tormented soul, the restless spirit, the mortal languor, the deceit and vanity of all things, the corruption of the flesh, the weakness and insufficiency of human reason, the power of the prince of darkness, and the belief in the anger of an avenging God, all weighed heavily on the suffering, sensitive heart, until they crushed and consumed it.

"He was a great poet," said Guido, sadly, "but a most unhappy man. Toward the close of his life he sank into a state of deplorable religious fanaticism. He maintained that all systems and all thoughts of the human heart are but a long succession of contradictions. His essay on Idols bears the seal of the most sombre asceticism. He condemns all the poems that cannot be accepted by the Church. He says idolaters are those poets who give place in their verse to the gods of Olympus: idolaters are they who sing of love, — the most guilty of idolaters; and he confesses that he himself was in other times an idolater, for all souls that are attached to earth are temples consecrated to idols. Idolaters, again, are they who search for swift dogs for the chase, to pursue and worry their prey, and those who desire noble horses to shine in the tournament, — those who love the birds of song, the gardens and the palaces, the murmuring waters and the flowery hills, the precious cloths, the perfumes of Arabia, the stones of the Orient; idolaters are those who aspire to be admired, as councillors, as doctors, as judges, as sculptors, as painters, as poets.

"What had become of that enthusiasm which was the soul of the Jerusalem Delivered? It was gone. Adieu to that living fire, that spirit of joy, which the poet, in love with his own work, imparts to all his creations. To what penitence the Church made his genius submit! That muse, by turns so human and so celestial, — that muse, which knew how to take every tone and unite them in one delicious harmony, — that muse which painted with words of fire the fever of love and the accents of peace and gentleness, the presence of God in the heart of the just, — must expiate the crime it had committed by repeating upon its lyre all the songs of the soul. And for daring to find something of God in the clay of which our passions are moulded, penitent sinner, see him pass before us, uncrowned, his head covered with ashes, hiding his captive wings under the sackcloth."

"Why is it," said Constance, "that great genius is so often at war with the simplicity of life? Does God design, when he clothes it with common clay, that it should forget its humanity and aspire to be equal with the Creator? Has not an unlawful ambition been too often the cause of suffering to these great hearts?"

"They saw more than we," replied Guido. "They sometimes penetrated into the sublime mysteries of the soul; they wrapped themselves in a mantle not altogether woven of the common woof of earth, and which shrank tremblingly away from the incongruities of life; and the nearer they approached the divine, the more the mortal combated with what it could not resist. So they in their dual existence enjoyed neither. They could not sink to the world, because they were not of it; nor could they mount to heaven, because the wings that desired to rise were borne down by the weight of clay."

"Ah, Signor Guido," said the Prince, who stood near with Mrs. Tremaine on his arm, "your theory is very pretty. But it is my belief that half their sorrows were imaginary. I dare say, on the whole, they were a set of jolly old fellows. Look at Byron and Shakespeare, for example, — your greatest poets, Miss Wilbreham; they did not disdain to partake of the common enjoyments of life, nor to take deep draughts from the cups of illicit pleasure. I must say that I am astonished myself that men who, by the power of their genius, might have aspired to the purity of angels, should have so trailed their wings in the mire of earth."

"Yet we know," replied Constance, "that they were at times the prey of a devouring melancholy."

"You have talked here long enough," said Mrs. Tremaine. "Let us go into the garden; I wish to see the oak under which Tasso loved to sit during the last days of his deplorable life."

"Is it a legend that the veritable oak of Tasso was destroyed by lightning?" inquired Madame Landel of Guido.

"I cannot say; but I suppose it matters little. We know in these gardens the poet has walked with trembling steps, the fever in his veins and the pallor of death upon his lips. He has rested under the shade of the trees; and from this hill has contemplated, for the last time, the Eternal City."

It was near sunset when they crossed the church, and entered the cloister surrounded by graceful antique columns, sad, and gray, and moss-covered. From these they passed through a wicket gate into the garden. Nothing could be more simple and rustic than that rather small enclosure, situated upon the summit of the Janiculum, — a field of tomatoes, a few vines and fig-trees, an ancient fountain, with moss-covered basin, shaded by roses and laurel.

The slight murmur of a little rivulet, hidden entirely by the wild tangled grass, flows at the foot of the hill, that rises suddenly and is surrounded by a mound of turf. Near the convent is a grotto, the entrance to which is covered by shrubs and vines, and above a niche ornamented with a broken urn. Here everything is left to desolation. The wild fern and acanthus grow undisturbed, the ivy, nettle, and thistle entangled with a fantastic vine that runs over all.

On the side of the hill that overlooks Rome is a small hemicycle of stone, surrounded by a row of cypresses. It is there that Filippo Neri assembled his young pupils and taught them a style of church music entirely new, — those sacred works called Oratorios. At the foot of the terrace is a little wall in ruin, and on the left rises the enormous trunk of the oak of Tasso. Ah, what a picture was spread out before the eyes of the divine poet! At the right the long circle of the Janiculum, with Trastavere at its feet; its gardens, its vineyards, and its terraces crowned with churches. At the base the Aventine, that descends suddenly to the Tiber, whose course can scarcely be seen save by the long line of houses, high, narrow, irregular, and yellow as the water that bathes their feet, pierced with little deep windows from which flutter, like banners, rags of many colors. Beyond is Rome, — immense; from the Piazza del Popolo to the pyramid of Cestus! — Rome, with its tiled roofs covered with faded and yellow moss, — Rome, with its splendors that nothing can equal, superbly towering above all, its domes and cupolas painted with dusky gold; and, far beyond, the shady heights of the Pincio, the gardens of Sallust, and the long verdant ravine that separates the Quirinal from the Esquilin, overshadowed by Santa Maria Maggiore. Nearer, the tower of the Capitol, the Palatine with its cypresses, myrtles, and pomegranates trailing their abundant foliage over the immense arches of the ruined palaces of the Cæsars. The deserted Aventine, with its solitary churches surrounded by stunted olives; the Cœlian, with its long sweep, terminated by the sublime basilica of St. John Lateran. In spite of the distance, one could see outlined against the sky the statues that surmount it. In the limpid air they seemed like spirits who had poised there a moment to take breath before their flight to heaven. Farther away the *campagna*, one long undulating sweep, destitute of all verdure save here and there a hoary pine; and farther still the Alban Mountains, bathed in purple light. Then the faint outline of the Sabines, their summits lost in the hazy atmosphere. Turning, one sees Mount Vatican, St. Peter's, a row of pines designed upon a gorgeous sunset sky, the fig-trees and aloes impregnated with a golden dust, and nearer the fountain, a mass of liquid silver, on which trembles long rays of rosy lights.

"Let us sit at the foot of the oak," said Guido, "and fancy Tasso is sitting here with us, pale and trembling with fever. 'To-night,' he says, 'I shall go to bed never to rise again. I will look now at Rome for the last time. There is the palace of Monte Giordiano, where I lived in my early youth; and beyond, the convent of Santa Maria del Popolo, the asylum opened to my old age. Without the aid of those good brothers I should have died of hunger long ago. Behind me is the Vatican, where I have passed many hours of mortal anxiety, always to be disappointed. Here is the Capitol, where they prepared my crown, — a preparation, alas! useless. The fever that devours me had told too much. Ah! I will turn my eyes from that city where I have so suffered, and contemplate the mountains, the supreme ornament of that vast picture. They communicate to the soul infinite aspirations mixed with the sweetness of eternal repose. That repose begins for me. I have a foretaste of it. I feel the overshadowing of ineffable peace.'"

All were silent for some moments, lost in thought, or contemplating the lovely scene with mingled feelings of melancholy and admiration.

Then the Prince said, "If I had the misfortune to be a poet, I should not seek an asylum here, lest the memory of the unhappy Tasso should work the same disorder in me. I believe his diseased mind magnified trifling

ills into great realities, and that exaltation was accompanied by an access of fever and delirium, until, weakened by his own violences, the spirit of revolt gave place to meek resignation. If I should write his elogy, I should conclude it in these words: 'Tasso owed one half of his misfortunes to the weakness of his character, and the other half to the beauty of his genius.'"

As the Prince finished, a monk approached to tell them it was *Ave Maria*, and time to close the gates. They gave a lingering look at the lovely scene, and then slowly walked down the silent garden, and by the sombre cloister, — out from the retreat of a suffering heart into the gay, glad world.

Once Constance found herself near Guido, who certainly had avoided her of late. She glanced timidly into his face. It was sad and gloomy, and he no longer met her eyes with that tender intelligence that had been so dear to her.

As they descended the long steep hill to the carriage, Guido looked back at the solemn pile, growing darker and more solemn in the gathering twilight, and said, "All is calm and tranquil there. How unlike the strife and discord, the restless passions, of the world! I think a little later, when I have grown entirely weary of life, I too shall seek a refuge there. Some people are born at strife with happiness. I am one. Melancholy has been my inseparable companion. The future has nothing to give me either of love, honor, or happiness. Such a retreat would at least be a tranquil ending to a weary life."

"O Signor Guido!" she returned earnestly, "you mistrust your own power. God has given you a wonderful talent by which you may win honor. The future is yours to make yourself a noble career, if you will. Why do you speak so despondingly?"

"Because I have no motive, no aim, to make me ambitious. I am alone in the world, and there is none to care whether I rise or fall. We cease to desire distinction when there is no one to share our honor."

He spoke more bitterly than she had ever heard him. And it was his first reference in any way to himself. She longed to say something comforting to him, but they had reached the carriage, and there was no opportunity. Neither she nor Guido took any part in the conversation during the drive home. Both seemed immersed in deep thought.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE CHARITY OF THE WORLD.

"WHERE is Signor Bernardo?" said a tall, thin lady, with a sharp nose, and a little crimson line for lips, to another distressingly fat, with *nez retroussé*, and shaggy eyebrows, from under which peered a pair of hard steel-gray eyes. "How is it? He used to be your *chevalier* at all the concerts, and I never see him now."

It was in the concert-room of the Sala di Dante that the thin lady asked this question of the fat friend at her side. And Constance, with Madame Landel, occupied the seat directly behind, while Mrs. Tremaine, the Prince, and Mr. Carnegie sat a few seats in front of them. For the room was well filled when they arrived, and it was impossible to find places together.

"I don't know," replied the fat lady, in a coarse, vulgar voice, "but I suppose he is dangling after that English girl they say he is in love with. The rest of her party are here, and she is not with them. It is more than likely she has stayed at home to entertain her lover!"

"Who are her party?"

"Why, do you not know the yellow-haired woman that all Rome is talking of, with her two lovers, — the Prince Conti, and that stiff Scotchman, Carnegie? They are always together."

"Ah! this lady in the pearl satin, in the third seat in front of us, between the Prince and Mr. Carnegie?"

"Yes, that is the lovely Mrs. Tremaine that all the world is raving about. But is n't it shocking the way she goes on with Conti? Every one knows he will never marry her, and yet they make no secret of their preference, but go into society openly, as though they did not care what the world thought."

"She is very lovely, certainly," observed the thin lady. "But who is she? Is she one of the Tremaines of Sussex?"

"I don't know. Nobody knows much about her. But I believe she is of common family, and, besides, she has a husband living from whom she is divorced, or something of that sort. I dare say it was her fault. Her manners are not those of a proper person."

"But she goes into good society, does she not?"

"Yes, certainly. Though I was told the other day that Lady Laura Cavendish turned her back upon her at an assembly."

"Lady Laura Cavendish! Well, that is too good. It was not more than a year ago that the Queen refused to receive *her* at her drawing-rooms. Well, such people usually take the initiative in these matters. However, they should remember the old proverb about those who live in glass houses. But what did Mrs. Tremaine say?"

"O, nothing! She tossed her head, laughed, took the arm of Conti, and walked off. But hear how Conti took his revenge. You know he is a great friend of the Bor-

ghese princes. So when they gave their grand ball Lady Laura was not invited, — about the only foreigner of any note who was left out. She was furious with rage. But this Mrs. Tremaine was there in all her glory, and received the most marked attention from the Prince and Madame the Princess. Of course, people do not like to offend Conti, so that is the reason she is tolerated. But it is a reproach on respectable families to receive such a person."

"And her friend, the girl Signor Guido is in love with, is she pretty?"

"I have not seen her, but I have been told she is one of the pale, interesting beauties. Just the face to catch such a silly fellow."

"And *her* family?"

"She is a clergyman's daughter at Helmsford. You remember Vandeleur? Well, Helmsford is his estate. And I have it from the best authority that he was engaged to marry this girl, and that on the very eve of the wedding he went away and left her, without a word of explanation to any one. So you see she is not above reproach. However, I don't care for that; but is n't it too tiresome, when I have done so much for that young man, that he is so ungrateful? Just now, when I need him to make my musical *soirées* attractive, he keeps away, and nothing will induce him to sing. It is always the way. I am so tired of patronizing artists; for as soon as they find themselves in the position I have helped them to attain, they directly forget they owe anything to me, and affect airs of independence that are absolutely intolerable."

"But do you really think this girl is in love with him?"

"They say he is always with her. I know no more than that; but, for a certainty, no well-bred young English lady should encourage her music-master, especially when he is under the rigorous rules of a priest. And that is not the worst; his birth would surely prevent any one from marrying him. You have heard the story? Illegitimate, you know, and a foundling."

Constance turned deadly pale and looked imploringly at Madame Landel, while she whispered, "Let us go, I can endure this no longer."

"It is impossible, my dear; we must not leave Mrs. Tremaine. Attend to the music, and do not listen to such ill-bred people, who ought to remember that some one besides themselves may understand English."

Just then a celebrated pianist began Beethoven's seventh symphony, and they forgot their scandal to listen.

Guido met them in the dressing-room, after the concert was over. A reception at the Cardinal Catrucci's had prevented him from coming before. He hurried forward to assist Constance in putting on her cloak, but she, without looking at him, turned toward Mr. Carnegie. At that moment the fat and the thin woman entered the room. Guido went to speak with them, and Constance said to Mr. Carnegie, as he put on her cloak, "Can you tell me who that lady in the yellow satin is?"

"O, that is Mrs. Parlby, the widow of a Manchester cotton-merchant. She is very rich, lives in a splendid palace, keeps liveried servants, and is a powerful patroness of Signor Guido. She is intensely vulgar. Indeed, it is said she was one of the factory spinners, whom the old merchant educated, and then married. Whether that be true or not, there is one thing certain, she is not a lady; and I would rather fall face downward into a nest of wasps than to incur her dislike, for she stings without mercy."

"I am sure she does," replied Constance, "from some remarks I have just overheard. But let us hurry. I do not wish her to see me in the company of Signor Bernardo."

She went home with a sick and weary heart. When she reached her room, she sat down to think over what she had heard. And so her name was already coupled with his. People had spoken lightly of her in connection with this unfortunate young man. Illegitimate! how terrible the word seemed to her! That accounted for the silence in regard to his family and past history which they had often noticed and spoken of. But she could not blame him that he had never told her. He had never tried to win her love. He had never by word professed any attachment for her. It was true, during the first days of their acquaintance, they had been almost constantly together. And then his looks; those thousand unspoken evidences of affection; and that day when he had sheltered her from the storm, under his mantle, — that brief moment, — could she ever forget the tumultuous beating of his heart? The memory of it now maddened her. Yes, he had loved her then. Suddenly she understood it all, and something like a thrill of joy shot through her heart. He loved her, but the disgrace of his birth prevented him from confessing his love. Poor, brave, noble heart! He was trying, by coldness and indifference, to deceive himself and her. That explained his sadness, his sudden change of manner. "Poor soul!" she murmured, "poor, sad, unhappy heart! why has fate placed such barriers between us? O, if it were but anything else, — poverty or humble lineage! But this is impossible; I must forget him. It is madness to think of him. It is useless for me to dream of happiness, I am never to be happy."

Then the memory of that dull September day crossed her heart with a pang. "So the world knows that secret of my life; and how charitable it is in the construction it puts upon our separation! It is well; God

knows all, and judges us more mercifully than our fellow-creatures. I thought then the wound I had received would never heal. But it has healed; and this will too, I suppose, if I can only wait. But I am so tired, — in fact, I have been tired all my life. O dear, darling papa, why did you not take me with you?"

And a burst of bitter, passionate weeping soothed her somewhat, after which she prayed for herself, but more earnestly for him, that God might make him happy, adding the thought, "Poor darling! how he has suffered! O, if anything had parted us but this terrible circumstance of his birth, how soon would I put aside all other obstacles and become his wife, if he wished it! I know he loves me; yes, I am sure he loves me in spite of all." And with this thought in her heart she fell into a peaceful sleep, and dreamed that she stood on one of the terraces of Helmsford looking out toward the sea. The sun shone, the birds sang, and Guido was by her side, no longer sad and solemn, but so glad and happy. And then she knew she was his wife, and they were to be parted no more forever.

She awoke with a feeling of deep happiness nestling like a tender bird in her bosom. And happiness is often as restless as sorrow. She could not sleep, so she arose and looked at her watch. It was two o'clock. She opened the curtains and stood in the window. The night was clear and warm. Diana was dreaming in rapture on the distant hills; the breeze just stirred the leaves of the orange-trees; and the oleander-blossoms trembled and shivered as though a spirit had passed over them in its silent flight to the serene heavens. The water of the fountain fell with a monotonous and gentle murmur into the marble basin below, and a lone cricket chirped in the wall. All was silence and repose.

She threw a dressing-gown around her, and stepped out upon the balcony, where she could see on the opposite side of the court the window of Guido's room. "I wonder if he sleeps," she thought, as she walked forward.

But, much to her surprise, the curtains were open, and a faint light streamed over the vines and flowers that adorned his balcony. "He cannot sleep, he is studying or writing"; and she leaned softly forward, that she might look into his chamber.

Before an antique reading-desk, on which lay open an ancient illuminated missal, knelt Guido. His long black robes fell around him, his hands were clasped on the book, and his cheek rested on his folded hands. His eyes were closed, but his face was turned toward the pictured Madonna that smiled upon him from the wall; and the light from a waxen taper that burned above fell full upon his pale forehead. He was either in silent motionless prayer, or, worn out and exhausted by his conflicting feelings, had fallen into a heavy slumber.

Was he praying, or was he sleeping? She could not determine. But she felt, as she stole back to her room, that he only needed the aureole above his brow, to look like a saint.

"Dear angel," she said, half weeping; "a little while the thorns, the bleeding feet, the aching heart, and then God, I trust, will give us both eternal peace."

The next morning, at the breakfast-table, a note was handed to Constance. She opened it. It was dated Hotel de Rome, and was from Lady Dinsmore. She wrote: "We arrived late last night, and are too tired to go out to-day. Will you come to us directly?"

An hour later Constance and Madame Landel were shown into the private parlor of Lady Dinsmore, who entered in a few moments, followed by a fair delicate girl of seventeen. She took Constance in her arms and kissed her tenderly, and then presented her daughter, whom she called Florence. "I hope you will like each other, and become fast friends." Then, taking a seat on the sofa near Madame Landel, she began an earnest conversation with her, leaving the young ladies to make the acquaintance of each other. But while Constance listened to the somewhat uninteresting account of Miss Dinsmore's journey from London to Paris and from Paris to Rome, her eyes were reading the face of her father's friend. She was not old, certainly not over forty-five; rather thin and slight, brown hair a little streaked with gray, low full forehead, soft blue eyes, straight nose, and rather thin lips, drooping at the corners in sorrowful curves. She must have been very lovely in her early youth, for she was lovely now. It was a face that one could not see and pass without turning for another glance, — calm, gentle, sweet; that transient, undefinable shade of sorrow, like the silvery haze that softens the beauty of a summer sunset; something that told you she had drunk deeply of the brimming cup of joy and love, as well as the bitter draught that so often follows.

There are some faces which plainly show that a tragedy has formed some part of their experience, and although we have not read the argument, it is not difficult to determine something of the plot by the actors that pass over the scene. In some eyes the fires of passion seem forever burned out, and one can judge something of their intensity by the ruin and ravage that is left. In others, desire and joy are gone forever, but

hope and faith still remain. They live on the past, on sweet memories that they nourish and keep green with secret, silent tears; or they look forward with patient, unquestioning trust to the union that shall be eternal. Such faces bear the impress of the thoughts and feelings that have swept over them. Such eyes look through misty tears beyond the veil into the beautiful unseen. Such natures never grow old or hard, but are always gentle, pitiful, and charitable.

Such a character was Lady Dinsmore. No one knew her who did not love her. Her daughter worshipped her as something beyond frail, feeble humanity. Her servants, her poor dependants, her friends, even her ordinary acquaintances, found in her a combination of perfections seldom united in the same person. Some refining process had taken place in a character naturally noble and beautiful; and Constance, as she studied her face, knew that behind that placid exterior was hidden the history of a life. What was it? The same old story that has known no change since the birth of time.

Constance longed for her confidence and love, and for a moment almost envied the girl at her side the possession of such a mother. And Lady Dinsmore, while she had been talking with Madame Landel, had also been regarding Constance.

"I feel it a pleasure," she said, "as well as a sacred duty I owe to her father, to take her into my heart and love her as my own child; and I am sure her sweet face declares her worthy the utmost affection."

"Yes," replied Madame Landel, "she is indeed worthy your ladyship's esteem. I have known her inmost life for eight years, and I have learned how noble and beautiful a nature she has. She has suffered much, but so patiently and quietly that one cannot but admire and respect her."

"Poor child! and she is quite alone in the world but for you. Her father was a man of great discrimination, and his confidence in you is justified by the fidelity with which you have discharged your duty. He was fortunate, dear Madame, in finding such a companion for his child."

"What I have done, I have done for love. She is very dear to me," replied Madame Landel. "In the future I hope we shall be much together, and I will try to make her forget that she has never known a mother's love."

From that day their friendship increased rapidly. They naturally liked each other, and the addition to their party of Lady Dinsmore and her daughter was indeed pleasant to all; and, beside, Mr. Carnegie was a very old friend of her family.

As soon as Lady Dinsmore had heard the sad and strange history of Mrs. Tremaine, and of her unhappy attachment to the Prince Conti, she at once took her with Constance under her especial protection, and tried by every gentle and thoughtful attention to teach her that there could be other loves and hopes in life aside from that absorbing passion. Not that Helen was ever sad, gloomy, or complaining. No; she seemed to live in a sort of delusive happiness, which she did not wish disturbed by any reference to the future. Mr. Carnegie seemed to have forgotten to be a lover. A kind, thoughtful brother could not have been more devoted than he. Sometimes when he looked at her, as she leaned on the arm of the Prince, and listened to his words of flattering adoration, he would think sadly, "Poor child! if I could only save her from the sorrow that must be hers in the future. Can she not see that each day she passes in the society of this weak, unprincipled man adds another link to the chain that binds her to him?"

From the night that Constance had overheard the conversation in the Sala di Dante her manner had entirely changed toward Guido. It was true she seldom saw him now, except at her lessons; and then she was the dignified, attentive pupil, — nothing more. Those little half-confidences were over. There were no more adoring glances from the dark eyes of Guido, as he sang with her sweet, impassioned romances; no more timid, trembling smiles from Constance. She was grave, almost severe. If her heart ached under the tight grasp with which she held it, she only increased the pressure, because she felt she must then and there crush that love, or later it would crush her.

There were no more evenings passed together in sweet but dangerous dallying at the piano, or with heads bent over some Italian poem which too often expressed their own tender love. For everything connected with Guido seemed to her imagination poetry and music. The very words of his beautiful language breathed passion. The sound of his voice, the sweet, sad smile, the tender melancholy nature, all made his presence too dear and too seductive.

And Guido also knew and avoided the danger he experienced in the presence of this lovely, pure English girl, so different from the dark, passionate beauty of his own countrywomen. To him she was a saint, an angel, something far above even his adoring eyes. "Ah!" he sometimes thought, "she cannot be mine on earth, but I will enshrine her in my heart as Dante did his Beatrice, as Petrarch his Laura, as Tasso his Leonora, and she shall be my only love. It is better to worship her memory than to be the idol of any other woman. Then, after a little waiting, I shall see her forever in the paradise of the free."

And so he lived, and worked, and sang, and dreamed his sweet dream with smiling lips and tearful eyes, and the world noticed that there was a sweeter, more touching pathos in his voice than ever before.

CHAPTER XXVI.

I SEEM TO HAVE HEARD THAT VOICE BEFORE.

THE Christmas festivities had commenced, and nearly every day Lady Dinsmore and her daughter, accompanied by Constance and Mrs. Tremaine, were seen at the ceremonies, concerts, and receptions. Madame Landel rarely went with them; now that she was no longer needed as chaperon, she preferred remaining quietly at home.

To Florence Dinsmore the world was new, bright, and beautiful, and her mother rejoiced to see in the buoyant spirits of her child signs of returning health. Although her heart was not in any of the gay scenes, she willingly made the sacrifice of inclination to increase the innocent happiness of her daughter.

Constance, who studied closely every change in the gentle face of the lady, often saw her eyes grow dreamy and tearful, and a far-off expression, that seemed to look into the past or future, would fall over her like an impalpable veil, and she would be oblivious of all around her. Then the girl would gently lay her hand on hers, and smile into her face a look of intelligence, as though she understood her thoughts. Between them there seemed to be that tacit sympathy, that deep comprehension, that showed there was something akin in their natures and experiences.

Often during some brilliant reception, while Mrs. Tremaine, the Prince, Florence, and Mr. Carnegie were dancing, laughing, and talking together, Lady Dinsmore and Constance would sit apart in a quiet corner, absorbed in grave, and sometimes sad conversation. There were times when she desired to open her heart to her friend, and tell her of this new trial, which, in spite of every effort to lighten it, seemed to be the heaviest she had ever endured. Do all she would, — distract herself with all the interests of life, enter into the world with a feverish eagerness, search ever after some new enjoyment, — yet amid all that love haunted her, and filled every moment of her life to the exclusion of duty and pleasure.

Although she seldom saw Guido, yet she heard him. In the morning, when she awoke, his matins were the first sound that fell upon her ear. In all the church ceremonies he seemed to sing alone to her. How could she forget him, when she was always under the influence of that wonderful voice? She felt that distance was her only hope, and sometimes she longed for her quiet home and her far-off graves, that she might kneel above the dust of her father, and implore strength from Him who would know and understand the sufferings of his child.

It was very evident to Lady Dinsmore, that the Prince, in spite of his preference for Mrs. Tremaine, had placed his aspiring eyes on Florence as one of the richest heiresses of England. From the first she had shown no liking for, but rather an indifference to him.

"Does he dare think," said Lady Dinsmore, during a confidential chat with Constance, — "does he dare think I will give my child to one whom I know to be mercenary and unprincipled, and whose affections are already bestowed upon another woman? I cannot understand Helen's infatuation for that man. Truly he is as handsome as Apollo, and of a most fascinating address; but when she knows his love is not superior to his avarice, how can she worship him as she does? If he were unselfish and courageous, and did not fear to face poverty with her, then I could understand her devotion; but as it is, I cannot," and she sighed. "What a mystery is the human heart! My child shall marry the man she loves if he is worthy of her, no matter what his birth or position may be. If he loves her, and is good and noble, she shall be his wife."

"What," said Constance, with a little tremble in her voice, "if he was of lowly birth, — illegitimate, for example, — would you be willing then?"

"I cannot tell," she replied; "but I think my child would scarcely love one who had sprung from such an ignoble source."

Constance said no more, but her heart sank heavily, and she thought, "Even she, so good and charitable, and so much above the prejudices of the world, could not ignore that!"

It was Christmas day, and St. Peter's was magnificent in commemoration of the birth of the Prince of Glory. The imposing procession had passed to the high altar, — the priests, the canons, the singers, the bishops, the cardinals, and then the Pope, borne aloft on his gold and velvet throne, surrounded by all the pomp and majesty of a religion almost Pagan or Oriental in the gorgeous forms of its ceremonies.

The ladies, in their black dresses and veils, were seated in the tribune near the choir. And Constance listened, unmindful of all else, to the voice of Guido, that rose and floated, clear and thrilling, and distinct above the others, as they sang the sublime anthem of praise, *Gloria in excelsis Deo!* She knew his voice so well that she could distinguish it in its softest and most tender

inflections. Indeed, she seemed to hear that alone in all the variations of melody that floated around her.

Suddenly Lady Dinsmore laid a hand on her arm, and said in a choked whisper, while her face was deadly pale, "I seem to have heard that voice before. How strangely familiar it is!"

"Which?" inquired Constance, with a faint flush, for to her there was but one voice, yet she did not wish Lady Dinsmore to know it.

"I cannot tell you, I do not hear it now; but it was wonderful, and so familiar, it reminded me of something heard long ago in my youth."

Again the mist of tears dimmed her eyes, and she fell into a deep revery.

Constance, who sat next her, watched her closely, and she was sure she never once glanced at the Pope, in his magnificent robes and mitre, performing mass at the high altar, surrounded by all the emblems of that glorious day. Neither did she turn her soft eyes toward the majestic dome with its painted angels floating so far above, that one almost fancies he is looking through a rent into heaven. Nor did she remark all the vast, swaying, palpitating mass before her. Only at the elevation of the host, when all alike, impressed with the solemnity of the scene, fell prostrate before the Most High, Constance heard distinctly below the thrilling strains of the silver trumpets a choked, convulsive sob. Where had the woman's soul strayed? What memories had that voice awakened in her heart?

CHAPTER XXVII.

LADY DINSMORE AND THE MAESTRO.

"I HAVE taken tickets for the Braschi ball on the 30th," said Lady Dinsmore one day to Constance and Mrs. Tremaine, who were sitting with her. "I supposed you would both like to go, so I subscribed for four tickets."

"O, thanks!" cried Helen, eagerly. "I am so glad. I did not dare hope for such a pleasure, as Constance all the season has resolutely set her face against balls, and it is useless to expect Madame Landel to go without her. So since Lady Charlotte went to Naples I have been a prisoner."

"Indeed, I cannot go," said Constance, sadly. "I have not the desire, and then I cannot lay aside my mourning even for one evening."

"My dear," replied Lady Dinsmore, "I think you need have no scruples about it; it is to be a charity ball and concert together, — music first and dancing after. If you do not wish to remain, we can leave when the concert is finished."

"And so spoil my pleasure, you naughty mamma," said Florence, pouting. "You know I only care for the dancing."

"And I also," laughed Mrs. Tremaine. "But Constance will find the music most interesting, as I hear the Pope has given Signor Guido permission to sing. The object being to raise funds toward finishing the new hospital, which is likely to be needed, as there are rumors of political troubles in this vicinity at no distant time."

"Who is Signor Guido?" inquired Lady Dinsmore.

"What! have you not seen him? He is the most celebrated singer in Rome, the first tenor of the Pope, and Constance's master," with a sly smile. "If you had been here a month or two ago you would have seen him in some of your visits to us, as he was almost always in our drawing-room of an evening; but now he has taken a whim to stay away, and all my efforts to induce him to come as usual are useless, he will persist in being stubborn!"

Constance changed the subject as quickly as possible, by saying she would go, adding some inquiries respecting her toilet for the evening. Mrs. Tremaine, when once launched upon the theme of dress, forgot her teasing propensity, and Constance breathed freely again.

The evening of the 30th came, and at nine o'clock Lady Dinsmore and her daughter, Constance and Mrs. Tremaine, alighted from the carriage, and passed between the double line of dragoons up the broad marble staircase of the grand entrance to the palazzo Braschi.

Rare old tapestry hung on each side of the lofty corridors, and the regal apartments were festooned with silk of every hue, brilliant with golden fringe and studded with stars and emblems. Flowers bloomed in marble vases; statues of exquisite workmanship supported antique candelabras, from which sprang jets of light; graceful fountains, surrounded by fragrant lilies slumbering on beds of damp green moss, threw up tiny streams, which fell with soft liquid ripples into the marble basins; alcoves filled with orange-trees, whose creamy blossoms made the air heavy with delicious odor. Strains of bewildering music rose and fell on the perfumed air. Diamonds sparkled on fair bosoms and snowy brows, pearls gleamed amid dark tresses, and gems of the Orient flashed and scintillated, half hidden in meshes of burnished gold. The grand *salon* seemed a bed of rare tropical flowers, bending and waving under a breeze wafted from the rose-gardens of Araby. Beauty, light, and laughter, — waves of lace and garlands of flowers, — smiles on

faces that had always smiled, and lips that had always uttered gay nothings, — and smiles alike on lips that had quivered but a few hours before in grief and anguish or uttered dark words of hate and revenge. There the wife leaned with infinite sweetness on the arm of the husband she detested, while she smiled in the face of the lover she loved; and the husband in his heart longed to be by the side of a dark-eyed beauty who received the ardent compliments of a gay cavalier with evident pleasure and satisfaction.

Mammas, stately in velvet and diamonds, intrigued with proud delicacy to place in the most noticeable positions their marriageable daughters. Young offshoots of Roman nobility paid court to red hair and freckles with wonderful assiduity, because they were gilded by the filthy lucre made in trade, which they affected to despise and disdain; *n'importe*, the gold would not soil their white hands if it did bear the stain of shops and marts. It is safe to say that the greater part of the distinguished throng wore masks of smiles and robes of well-bred politeness over deceit and hypocrisy.

Every eye was turned upon Lady Dinsmore as she entered, leaning on the arm of Mr. Carnegie, followed by her daughter, Constance, and Mrs. Tremaine. Murmurs of admiration greeted them as they passed up the long *salon*. Helen was most lovely in pale blue moire antique, her yellow hair gleaming through the meshes of a gold net, escaping here and there and falling in waves of sunshine over her shoulders and dress.

Constance, in plain white silk, without ornament, her abundant dark hair simply arranged, formed a striking contrast to Helen. The one resembled a delicate steel engraving, the other a glorious Watteau. Florence was very sweet and innocent, in tulle and rosebuds; and Lady Dinsmore more fair and delicate than ever, in lavender silk and black lace.

In a moment the Prince was at their side, gay, animated, and handsome as the god of beauty.

"You are just in time," he said; "the curtain will rise in a moment, and Liszt will play one of Beethoven's sonatas, and afterwards Signor Guido will sing. See, there are but five pieces on the programme, — all exquisite, and by first-rate artists; so we can have a little patience until the dancing begins. Mrs. Tremaine, remember you promised me the first waltz; and Lady Dinsmore, may I have the honor of Miss Dinsmore's hand for the first quadrille? And Miss Wilbreham, I hope also — " "Thank you, I do not dance," interrupted Constance; "I shall be only a spectator after the music is finished."

A murmur! A hush! The green velvet curtain is drawn aside, and Liszt takes his place at the piano. He regards the audience long and steadily from under his heavy brows, with eyes gray, hard, and almost metallic. He adjusts, with an impatient twitch, his wristbands; throws back his long iron-gray hair; raises his thin lithe hands above the keys. Then for a moment he seems to be invoking the aid of some supernatural power; for a strange expression passes over his face, — something inscrutable, mysterious. Then the hands descend, and one forgets there is anything mechanical in music; they are inspired, — each finger seems a separate soul, and each soul expresses itself with force and passion. The metallic eyes light up. Fires of divine genius burn under each cavernous brow. The square, massive chin is thrust forward. The flexible mouth quivers and trembles. The Dantesque profile is more clear and cutting in its outline. The broad brow beams with a sort of transparency. The long locks dance and writhe. The fingers fly and float from key to key. The stern, sad face is transformed. The divinity of genius has made sublime the human, and for a moment the mantle has descended from above and hidden the mortal.

It was the first time the ladies had heard this great artist, and they listened spell-bound. It seemed to Constance as though every pulse had ceased to beat, as she followed him through all the intricacies of sound, — now high, now low; now passionate, thrilling, bewildering; then hushing all the senses into a silent rapture; again wailing forth in strains of irresistible force, bearing the longing soul into swift currents, toward unknown seas.

O great composer, who hast touched heights to others unattainable, in the calm and silence of thy life, when earthly discords were forever shut out, thou hast heard the songs of angels, and hast embodied thy tranced thoughts in notes that never before fell on mortal ears! O incomparable artist, who hast so worthily rendered the inspiration of the sublime master, who shall say that in thy inner and better life there are no revelations from above, to teach thee so to influence and subdue the hearts of a multitude with thy divine melody?

As he moved from the piano, little white gloves were laid together in rapturous applause; and bright eyes welcomed him with delight as he descended among the audience, bowing, smiling, and talking gayly with all. Constance followed him with her eyes, scarcely remembering that Guido was to sing next, until Helen touched her arm and said, "See, the conquering hero comes."

A burst of welcome greeted him as he

walked across the stage to the piano. He looked a little paler than usual, but rather triumphant, as though he was aware he had a place in the hearts of his compatriots equal to the great artist who had preceded him. He sang that exquisite canzonette of Rolli, "*Solitario bosco ombroso*," that Raff sang more than a hundred years ago, on that lovely moonlight night in the orange garden of Naples, to the Princess Belmonte. And Guido sang with the same pathos and power of expression to *one*, and that one was Constance. Although his eyes never once turned upon her, she felt that each word was addressed to her heart. She was absorbed, lost in the tender thoughts the song inspired, when a low exclamation from Florence startled her.

"O mamma! what is it?"

She looked at Lady Dinsmore; her hands were tightly clasped, her face deadly pale, and her eyes fixed with a sort of stare on Guido. "Are you ill, dear Lady Dinsmore?" inquired Constance, anxiously.

"No, no!" and she made a supreme effort to compose herself; "but that song, that voice, how strange! Who is this young man?" she said, in a hoarse, suppressed whisper, grasping Constance's hand and looking imploringly into her face.

"It is the singer of whom Mrs. Tremaine spoke the other day, Signor Bernardo."

"Bernardo," she repeated, — "Guido Bernardo." And then, pressing her hand to her eyes in a bewildered manner, she remained a few moments as if in deep thought, while Florence regarded her anxiously. When she looked up every sign of emotion had passed from her face, and she smiled as she said, "How foolish I am! but a strain of music, a passing resemblance, a name that reminds me of a dear friend of my youth, quite unnerve me."

At that moment Guido finished his song, and stood bowing and smiling in acknowledgment of the enthusiastic applause repeated again and again.

In a moment he was at the side of Constance, flushed, happy, excited; and as he took her hand he said, "Were you pleased with my song?"

Unawares she let her heart look through her eyes, as she replied, "O so much! it is a lovely composition, and you sang it with expression and feeling."

"I sang it for you," he replied, with an earnest look and a smile of deep tenderness.

"Thank you, I feel flattered," she returned, coldly, for again the heart was pressed down under the curb of pride.

Lady Dinsmore's eyes were fixed earnestly on Guido while he spoke, and when he turned suddenly at Constance's reply to address some remarks to Mrs. Tremaine she said, "Present this young man to me, my dear, I wish to know him."

Constance introduced him, and Lady Dinsmore gave him her hand with more than her usual kindness, as she made room for him beside her, and entered at once into an earnest conversation.

Constance had just taken the arm of a most elegant *guardia nobile* for a short promenade during the pause in the music. This young man had worshipped her at a distance all the season, but she had never so much as encouraged him with a smile. This evening, from some strange perversity, she was most gracious.

Mrs. Tremaine was as usual engrossed with the Prince, and Florence was listening to one of Mr. Carnegie's quaint and amusing criticisms on the society around them. So no one observed the purport of Lady Dinsmore's conversation with the *maestro*, but they all remarked that he never left her side for the evening. When they returned home, at an early hour, he escorted her to the carriage.

After the concert was finished, Lady Dinsmore and Constance wished to leave at once; but Mrs. Tremaine and Florence entreated so earnestly for just two dances that they agreed to remain a little longer. They entered the brilliantly decorated ballroom just as the band began a waltz of Strauss. In a moment Mrs. Tremaine and the Prince, Florence and Mr. Carnegie, were floating among the gay bubbles of fashion. Constance, leaning on the arm of the young *Marchese*, made the tour of the magnificent suite of rooms; admired the rare old pictures, china, and statuary. More than once she passed the manufacturer's fat widow and her lean friend, who were as busy as ever anatomizing somebody's character.

Mrs. Parlby's red shoulders gushed out of her yellow satin corsage, and her vulgar face was distressingly flushed, as she watched Guido with Lady Dinsmore, who seemed to monopolize him to the exclusion of every other friend.

"I don't see that Signor Guido is very *empressé* in his attentions to this girl," observed the long-nosed lady; "he seems rather to devote himself this evening to Lady Dinsmore. What a delicate, refined-looking woman she is!"

There was a little malice in the remark, for though outwardly the fat and thin ladies were the best of friends, secretly they hated each other, and one never let an opportunity pass to give the tender feelings of the other a sly stab. "I think you said on the evening of the concert that Miss Wilbreham was not of very good origin. She surely must be, or Lady Dinsmore, a daughter, as well as the wife, of a peer of

the realm, would not chaperon her into society."

"O, that does not follow!" and Mrs. Parlby gave her pug nose a more upward inclination. "You know what her father, Lord Radcliffe, was, — not a faster man in the United Kingdom." Then she added, in a lower and more confidential voice, with many mysterious grimaces, "I have heard even hints of some *escapade* in her youth, and I know it was said at the time of her marriage that there must have been something wrong to induce a young and pretty woman, and rich as she was, to marry old Lord Dinsmore, three times her age, I believe. However it is certain she can't be very particular in her morals, or she never would allow her daughter to be always in the society of that improper Mrs. Tremaine and Conti, who every one knows is a libertine!"

"Conti a libertine! Why, my dear Mrs. Parlby, don't you know it was generally believed you were most anxious to marry him to your niece last season, only the settlements were not sufficient to purchase the title, even with your *dot?*"

"Marry him to my niece! I would rather give her to an African." And her red face grew a shade redder with mortification, as she repeated, "What a falsehood! Society ought to be punished for circulating untruths."

"O, my dear, remember *I* don't say it was so; I only say every one thought so." And the thin creature gave a malicious chuckle as she glanced obliquely at her fat friend to see the result of her stab.

Just at that moment an exquisitely lovely lady, very *décolletée*, passed, leaning on the arm of a Zouave officer.

"Ah, there is the *Marchesa* and her lover, as usual. How can her husband support such an open intrigue! He *must* be a fool or blind. But they do say he *is* a little touched here," and the speaker tapped her forehead significantly; "wine and women, you know. But have you heard the last story of the *Marchesa?* It is rich, I can assure you."

"No, what is it? Do tell me." And the long nose quivered with eagerness, like a hungry dog's at the sight of a dainty bit of meat.

"Well, the other night, at the ball of the French Ambassador, she gave her fan to the young Viscount Le Carnie to hold while she danced with De Laborde. The foolish, awkward fellow dropped it, and, happily for the *Marchesa*, broke it. When the waltz was finished he gave it to her, with many apologies and regrets for his *gaucherie*. Whereupon the lovely angel turned red with anger, declaring it was an antique worth a thousand francs, and he had ruined it. The Viscount turned pale with mortification, but immediately, with more pride than delicacy, drew out his pocket-book, and laid a thousand-franc bill in her hand. She instantly threw it in his face, stamped her little foot with rage, demanded of De Laborde how he could see her so insulted, and then, bursting into tears of anger, she appealed to her husband, who at that moment appeared on the scene. The next day there was a challenge, but no duel followed, as it is said the *Marchese* arranged it with the Viscount, by borrowing a hundred thousand francs, which the victim was only too glad to lend, to get out of the scrape. A few evenings after this they were all together at the opera, as friendly as ever."

"Well, that is about a fair sample of the conduct of half the people who go into respectable society," remarked the listener, in an acid voice. "What protection can we who are proper have from such imposture?"

"Look! they are leaving," exclaimed Mrs. Parlby, as Lady Dinsmore, leaning on the arm of Guido, and followed by the others of her party, left the ball-room.

"Have you ever seen anything so cool? That impertinent Bernardo has never been near me this evening. He quite forgets all I have done for him, and runs after titles. Well, he will get no more invitations to my dinners."

"And you will get no more music, my dear, nor the society of the Earl of Crosslands, who says, with all due deference to your good dinners, he only accepts your invitations to hear Signor Guido sing afterwards. So it does not pay to cut off your own nose."

Mrs. Parlby winced, turned her back on her friend, and walked away in a towering passion, half doubting the sincerity of her devoted hanger-on, who was poor and lived in a little apartment, and liked to share her carriage and eat her good dinners.

"I believe she only pretends this friendship for what she gets out of me," was her conclusion, more truthful than elegant.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

ONLY A LITTLE MARBLE CROSS.

FROM the evening of Guido's introduction to Lady Dinsmore there seemed to exist between them a strong friendship. He was an almost constant visitor at her hotel, and in all their drives and excursions occupied a seat in her carriage. Florence and he, too, seemed not averse to each other's society. She commanded, advised, petted, and blamed him, much as she would

have done a brother. It was always Guido who must be consulted if any plan of amusement was proposed. And she would say, with an air of importance, "You know it is no use to decide until we have asked Signor Guido whether he will accompany us."

She had little talent for music, and a rather weak voice; but she was so anxious to sing, that with constant practice and the greatest patience on the part of Guido, she was becoming a tolerably fair musician, and Lady Dinsmore seemed to favor their growing interest and affection for each other. Constance was secretly glad of this intimacy, although it sometimes cost her a pang; she feared Guido might learn to love, with a deeper feeling than friendship, the gentle girl whose charms were so constantly before him. Still there was a freedom and frankness in their preference, a brotherly and sisterly sort of manner, very different from the shy expressions of love.

"I wonder if Lady Dinsmore knows the secret of his birth," she often thought.

One day, when they were speaking of Guido, her mind was set at rest on that subject by Lady Dinsmore herself, who said, "It is unaccountable the interest I feel in this young man. How I should like to know the history of his life! I have tried, but in vain, to induce him to speak of his past. It is a subject evidently painful to him, and which he always avoids. Has he ever spoken of himself to you, my dear?"

"Never," replied Constance, "but once, and then he said he had not a relation in the world that he knew of."

"How strange!" replied Lady Dinsmore, musingly. And then Constance changed the conversation. She could not bring herself to repeat the vulgar gossip she had heard from Mrs. Parlby on the night of the concert.

One morning Lady Dinsmore ordered the carriage and went out alone, after telling Florence that if Constance and Mrs. Tremaine called for her she might drive with them, as she should be absent some time. She ordered her footman to stop at the nearest flower-shop, and there she selected an exquisite wreath of white lilies and purple campanula.

"Drive to the *Campo Santo*," she said, in a quivering voice, as the servant laid it on the empty seat of the carriage.

When she reached the gate she alighted, and, after exchanging a few words with the custodian, she desired the servants to remain until she returned. Taking the wreath in her hand, she crossed the large square, with a slow, weary step, toward the chapel, and passed into the cemetery alone. She stood for a moment, looking around with a bewildered, undecided air, and then said, "How all is changed here! But it must be on this side; yes, I am sure it is on this side, near that tall cypress."

She threaded her way among the little black wooden crosses, decorated with faded garlands and the many tawdry offerings of the poor to their cherished dead, never stopping until she reached the foot of the tall cypress, near which was the object of her search. Was it a stately monument? No; only a little cross, a nameless little marble cross, over a child's grave.

She fell on her knees before it, and, burying her face in her hands, sobbed audibly. She remained a long time in that position, even after her moans of grief had died away into silence. Then, gathering some wild-flowers and tangled vine from the little mound, she pressed them over and over to her lips, murmuring all the while, "O my darling, my darling, have you grown weary with waiting for me? But patience! I shall come to you soon." She laid the garland on the little grave, and, placing a few of the wild-flowers in her bosom, stooped and kissed the sod as tenderly as though it were conscious of her love and sorrow. Then she arose and walked slowly away, looking worn and weary, but still pausing often to cast a lingering glance at the little cross glistening in the sunlight.

When Florence returned from her drive she found her mother lying on the sofa in her room, the blinds closed, and a handkerchief, wet with aromatic vinegar, bound over her temples.

"Are you ill, darling?" inquired the affectionate girl, as she knelt by her side and kissed her tenderly.

Lady Dinsmore drew her daughter to her almost convulsively, and, laying her hand on her shoulder, replied, "Not really ill, my dear, only tired and nervous; but leave me alone. I am better alone."

As Florence softly closed the door she said to herself, "What can be the matter with this darling mamma? She has seemed a little strange ever since she came to Italy."

One evening Mrs. Tremaine and Constance were walking back and forth in the moonlight on the balcony, engaged in a confidential chat, when Florence burst out upon them.

"Mamma is in the drawing-room with Signor Guido and Mr. Carnegie; we are on our way to the Coliseum, and have called for you to accompany us."

"O, how delightful!" exclaimed Helen; "but you must wait until the Prince comes. I told him I should be at home this evening. However, he will be very glad to make one of the party, and the more the merrier!"

"O, there is plenty of time!" replied Florence; "the view is the finest when the moon is at a certain height."

They all entered the drawing-room together. Constance had not seen Guido since the night of the ball, as, for some reason, he had asked to be excused from giving her a lesson on the usual day. When she looked at him she was startled by the change in his face. He was paler than ever before; his eyelids red and swollen, as though with sleepless nights and weeping, and there was such an expression of subdued sorrow around his mouth that her heart ached for him. She spoke gently, asking him if he were ill, that he had omitted her lesson the day before.

His face lighted up a little, and he replied, "No, not ill exactly, only a little weak and tired. In fact," he said, lowering his voice, "I thought it was better not to come yesterday."

Poor Guido! he was suffering the pangs and torments of jealousy. Since the night of the ball he had scarcely eaten or slept; and all because Constance had smiled on the *guardia nobile*. If she had known the cause of his sadness, her heart would have ached less, and she would not have made herself miserable with wondering what could ail him.

A half-hour afterward, the Prince came, and they started for the Coliseum. It was one of those nights too exquisite to describe; a full moon rode in splendor through the unclouded heavens; and as they entered the vast and gloomy ruin, they were all impressed with its majesty as they had never been before.

They sat down on the steps that lead to the cross which Christianity has erected in the broad arena, to mark the spot where her noble champions perished nearly two thousand years ago. Then the moon did not look down on rent and ruin, darkness and silence; but the yellow sun glared all day over the wild, restless Roman populace, unawed by the gorgeous splendor of the court, and untouched by the agony of the quivering lip, the ghastly brow, and writhing limbs of the dying martyr.

Guido and the Prince knelt to kiss the cross, as is the custom, hoping thereby to gain an indulgence; while the others, not quite understanding the motive that prompted them, did the same; perhaps each felt it not inappropriate to offer that mark of reverence to the emblem of the Christian religion.

As Constance arose from her knees she met the eyes of Guido fixed upon her with a strange earnestness, but suddenly, with a sigh, he turned away, and walked by the side of Florence.

They found a guide with a flaming torch, who conducted them through the gloomy vaulted corridors to the upper parapet.

"What a ghostly place!" said Lady Dinsmore, who with Madame Landel and Mr. Carnegie followed the guide, while Florence walked behind with Guido. Constance was with Mrs. Tremaine and the Prince. She was pale and silent, and her eyes scarcely left the two who were in advance of her. She heard Florence say, "I am afraid here, it is so dark and mysterious"; and, like a timid child, she slipped her hand into Guido's, who drew it through his arm with a smile of deep tenderness, saying, "Do not fear, I will protect you against every evil that haunts these silent chambers; they are not real, they are only imaginary, and my courage is equal to a host of such adversaries."

Florence smiled confidingly as she clung to him, and Constance's heart beat heavily as she thought, "I have been mistaken, it is she he loves. How foolish I have been to imagine he cared for me!"

When they had passed through the damp gloomy galleries lighted only by the red glare of the torch, and came out suddenly on to the moonlit terrace, all exclaimed involuntarily, "How lovely!" For beneath them lay Rome, — ancient and modern, — bathed in a flood of silvery light, the harsh rugged outlines softened and blended. The dusty red tiles and gray time-stained walls, touched by the mystic white beams, seemed a city of marble palaces. Far away the outline of the Alban and Sabine mountains rose dark and solemn against the clear sky. The low level sweep of the *campagna* was dotted here and there with dark masses of ruins; and the long line of crumbling aqueducts wound like a funeral procession, the first hooded mourners gliding from the sight into distance and darkness. Tall cypresses stood like grim sentinels over the tombs of the dead kings, and a hoary pine raised its crowned head until it seemed to touch the limpid sky. From the orange-trees and acacias that wave among the ruined palaces of the Cæsars came the long, mournful hoot of the owl mingled with the sweet, thrilling strain of the nightingale. In the arena below, the moonlight glistened on the steel helmets and pikes of the motionless sentinels. And the people, walking back and forth, or kneeling at the foot of the cross, looked like puppets performing a pantomime. The long trailing vines and branches in the broken arches waved and beckoned like phantom arms from the distance.

"Will you not sing, Signor Guido?" exclaimed Florence.

"Yes, do sing something for us," added Lady Dinsmore; "pathetic music would be so effective now."

"Do not let it be sad," said Constance; "let it be triumphant, — a *Laudate Dominum*, for example."

"Or go down into one of those subterranean vaults and sing a *De Profundis*," laughed Mrs. Tremaine.

"No," said Guido, "I will go up nearer heaven and chant a *Jubilate Deo!*"

He turned away, and in a moment appeared on the upper parapet, where he stood, his tall, dark-robed figure clearly outlined against the deep blue of the sky. Waving his hand to them, his glorious voice broke forth in the sublime *Cantate Domino* of Cherubini. As the deep thrilling tones fell on their ears they could distinctly hear the exulting words, "With his own right hand and his holy arm hath he gotten himself the victory."

It seemed as though the triumphant spirit of some young martyr had returned for a moment to review the scene of his earthly passion and suffering, and was again repeating to the listening angels the story of his conquest over sin and death.

Lady Dinsmore fell on her knees, and, covering her face with her hands, wept silently. The others stood with bowed heads and subdued hearts, listening intently until the last tones died away into the still air.

The emotion that Constance experienced was so overpowering that she felt the need of being alone for a few moments. Turning away, she walked to the end of the terrace, and, stepping into an interior arch, she sat down on a broken column, and fell into a deep revery.

First, there passed before her mental vision a long procession of captives, with gloomy brows and compressed lips, the fires of hate and scorn burning under their downcast lids, their hands fettered, their heads bent on their laboring breasts, and their hearts filled with the anguished memory of the free, glad life on the Judæan hills and amid the green groves of Olivet. Then a vast multitude, naked, emaciated, worn with fever and famine, scorched with the burning sun, toiling under the cruel lash of a taskmaster, and longing ever with irrepressible desire for one cooling draught of the limpid stream that rippled through the vale of Kedron. The old man with the hoary beard on his breast had been a patriarch in those days; and the youth with the form like Apollo had sat at his feet, and listened to his teaching. Now, chained together, they were hewers of stone under a foreign sky, slaves to the proud Emperor Flavius, who sat in his golden palace overlooking the vast arena where they toiled and languished. But see! the old man sinks under his labor; his limbs refuse to bear the weary body; the day is nearly done, and his task unfinished. He tries to struggle to his feet; the terrible fear of the torture, and the wild beasts, with gleaming teeth and bloody fangs, urge him to one more effort. Suddenly before him appears a youth clad in the rich robes of a Roman noble, with the signet of his birth upon his white hand. "Rest, father, rest," he says, "and I will labor and complete thy task."

Then the shout arises on the hot air, "Behold the Christian! take him, and bind him, and plunge him into the darkest cave." "Wait," cries the youth, with divine enthusiasm beaming from his brow; "wait until I have completed the old man's task, and then thou shalt do with me as thou wilt. It is true I am a Christian, and I am ready to die for my faith."

It is high noon, and the sun looks down on the proudest pile ever raised by human ambition and dedicated to torture and crime. In the grand *Podium* sits the Emperor, surrounded by his court, in all the pomp and magnificence of that period. Above and below are a vast crowd, with eager, excited faces; the wild beasts in their dens, waiting for their prey, are not more cruel and ferocious. The sweetest pleasure to them is to behold the combat, the peril, the incertitude of the struggle, — the blood, the agony, and the death. A wild joy sparkles in each eye. Eager, palpitating, impatient, they look toward the grating that confines the savage panther, as if they too would drink the blood so soon to redden the arena. Suddenly there is a crash of music and a shout like the voice of many waters.

"Behold him who comes to die!" A youth beautiful as the sun of the morning; on his lip is a smile of eternal peace, and his brow beaming with the light of divine enthusiasm. He looks far beyond; he sees not the clamorous multitude; he hears not their cries, nor the roar of the wild beast that springs upon him. No; for the soul is so rapt in the vision of heaven that he seems to have left the pain of death far behind. A moment of agony, a brief struggle, and all is over. The body of the young martyr is thrust into the *Spoliarium*, and one more name is added to the long list of those who have come out of great tribulation.

And to the scenes enacted there for the gratification of a depraved and licentious monarch followed the contrast of the present. A rude wooden cross erected over the spot that had been bathed in the blood of its defenders, — a procession of barefooted Capuchin monks, followed by a few pale, sad Sisters of Charity, paupers, and strangers, is all the ceremony that tells of its dedication to the Prince of peace.

Such were the thoughts that passed through the mind of Constance while she sat there, too absorbed to notice that the voices near her had ceased, and that she was alone.

Suddenly she started up and turned to-

ward the spot where she had left her friends; but they were gone, and not a person was on the terraces, above or below. She called, but no one replied. "They have gone," she thought; "they have forgotten me, or they think I am with Mrs. Tremaine and the Prince, who are always behind the others. I must remain here alone, or I must go through those terrible galleries until I reach the door by which we entered. There I can perhaps make the sentinels hear me." Still she shuddered and shrank from descending the long flights of broken steps that led to the dark caves. But she was not a coward, and the necessity was great; so she nerved herself to the trial, and went down into the mysterious darkness below, She hurried along a few paces, the silence broken only by the unearthly echoes of her light footsteps. The dense darkness, peopled with imaginary horrors, appalled her. She felt she could go no farther, and turned to regain the steps by which she had descended; but in her fright and confusion she went in the wrong direction, and, after groping a few moments helplessly in the dark, she was convinced that she was indeed lost. "If they return for me now, they will never find me, for my cries will never penetrate beyond those thick walls, and I cannot hear them if they call me. O my God, I shall go mad if I have to remain here until morning!" She thought of all the dark stories she had heard, of these caves being the haunts of robbers and assassins. From all the black vaults a thousand shadowy forms seemed to start, a thousand unearthly voices seemed to sound in her ears, and a thousand mysterious footsteps seemed to hasten toward her. She covered her face, and leaned half fainting against the damp stone of the cave, praying and weeping convulsively. Suddenly she knew she heard real footsteps, and the quick breathing of some one hastening toward her. A moment more, with a cry of relief and joy, unconscious of what she was doing, she threw herself on the breast of Guido.

"Thank God that I have found you!" he said, pressing her to his heart and kissing her tearful eyes and quivering lips over and over. She was weeping and trembling in his arms like a terrified child, and there in the gloom and darkness he wiped away her tears, and soothed her with every loving, tender word his gentle heart dictated.

When she was calmer he said, "Come darling, let us hasten to Lady Dinsmore; she is in a terrible state of anxiety; we thought you were with Mrs. Tremaine and the Prince until we all reached the carriage, then we missed you for the first time. The thought occurred to me, while the guide and Mr. Carnegie went in another direction, that you might be at the other end of the terrace, and so I was hastening there. I cannot tell you what I suffered," he said, as they came out into the moonlight. "I feared you might have fallen down some of those dark holes, or that the edge of the crumbling walls had given way under your feet. Let me look at you for a moment, to assure myself that you are not hurt." Taking her hands in his, and pressing them to his heart, he gazed long and tenderly into her face with an expression she never forgot, saying earnestly, "Thank God! you are safe"; then, drawing her arm through his, he gently led her down the long steps and through the silent galleries out into the calm night, under the stars and the glorious moon.

The ladies were sitting in the carriage, waiting anxiously. After many questions and explanations, Guido went in search of Mr. Carnegie and the Prince, and as they drove away the bells rang out the hour of midnight.

"What an adventure!" said Florence. "I am sure you rather liked it; you look as calm and composed as though we had not been suffering the most excruciating anguish for the last hour."

Constance assured them she was dreadfully frightened at the time, but as it was over, and she was safe, she did not feel inclined to be miserable at the remembrance. On the contrary, although she did not express it, she felt rather happy; for she still seemed to feel the tender kisses of Guido on her lips and eyes. But before she reached home, a feeling of mingled uncertainty and anger took possession of her. He could not love her, for even in that moment of joy, when he had pressed her to his heart and kissed her, he had not told her so; no, no, he could not love her, or he would have told her, and yet he had dared to kiss her. Her cheek burned with indignation, and she resolved to surround herself with a colder mantle of pride than ever.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE TIDE THAT BEARS US ON.

THE current that bears us on whether we will or not, that irresistibly forces us down the stream of time to the broad expanse of unexplored seas, often wrenches from our unwilling hands the gods we have clasped with fondest idolatry, and tears from our ruined lives the hours we have worshipped, yet only half enjoyed, because we have felt they were passing away forever. Often when the storms of passion and anguish tear and shiver our souls, like frail boats in a tempest, we look far beyond where we see a calm and smiling haven which we fain would reach, and long

for the moments to pass which bear us onward too slowly for our impatient souls. But sometimes the waves go in before us, and our frail barks are shattered on the inhospitable shores. Then we look back and wonder why we had longed to leave the safety of the broad seas. Again we stand shrinking and trembling under the shade of the green trees of life, looking over a wide desert before us. The sun scorches; the sand is hot and dry; there is no shadow of a great rock, no feathery palms, no green oasis. We dread to leave the cooling shade; the music of the rippling stream sounds in our ears; the fragrant vines caress us, and the soft breeze and the singing birds woo us to remain. Yet, pilgrim like, we set forth, leaning on our staff, with aching heart and many longing looks behind. Perchance beyond the arid expanse may be other valleys as still and fair that we know not of; but yet our souls desire what we have left. No streams can be so sweet as those at which we have drank, no shade so refreshing as that which has sheltered us; no music like the birds that sang in the boughs, no fragrant flowers like those that have bent beneath our caressing hand. We have rested on the breast of Love, and he has fanned us with his wings until the faint spark has kindled to a divine flame, which burns and consumes long after we have lost sight of the glowing vision; and our worn and weary companions seem but beasts of burden after we have feasted with the gods. O unquiet heart, longing and thirsting, knowest thou not there is a paradise for thee, fairer than the Eden thou hast left?

One day Mrs. Tremaine stood on the balcony, leaning her elbows on the stone balustrade, and resting her chin on her open palm. Before her lay the sunlit terraces of the Pincio, and over all beamed a blue and cloudless sky. Yet she noticed nothing of the beauty around her, for her eyes were fixed on vacancy, and her lips compressed as though she were absorbed in deep and painful thought.

"What are you dreaming of, Helen?"

She started and turned. Mr. Carnegie stood at her side. Holding out her hand, the sad look passed away from her face, and she said, smiling, "I was wondering if those white pigeons lying on yonder roof in the sun were not happier than I."

"What! are you not happy?" he inquired anxiously, as he drew her arm through his, pacing slowly back and forth.

"No," she replied, looking him steadily in the face, while the tears filled her eyes, — "no, I am very miserable."

"Poor child! Is it possible? I thought you were happy. I would give ten years of my life to save you one hour's sorrow," he said, with deep feeling.

"Truly? do you love me so deeply?"

"Yes."

She looked into his face searchingly, and then said, in a weary voice, "I am so glad to know that you really love me. It will be a great comfort to me later; the time is coming when I shall need a strong, true love like yours to help me bear the burden of life."

"Why do you speak so despondingly? What do you foresee?"

She pointed upward. "Look at that little cloud. It is very small and light, but hidden in it are thunderbolts; it will spread and grow black and lurid, and cover all the smiling heavens. Then the tempest will burst; but you will be my refuge, my shelter, will you not?" and she clung to him as though she already needed his protection against some real danger.

"Yes," he said, earnestly, "while my life lasts it is yours; only give me the right, Helen, — only give me the right."

"Hush!" she said, while a gleam of anger shot from her blue eyes; "do not speak of that, do not repeat the old story again. Remember what you promised me in Paris," and, turning from him, she went hastily into the house.

Mr. Carnegie stood a long time lost in sad thought, wondering how this would all end. At last he said softly to himself, "I will never speak of it again to her, but I shall always love her the same. My heart is full of the same infinite love and tenderness, and I can wait. Poor child! she is suffering now, and she does not understand her own heart; I will not annoy her by speaking of it again. By and by, when she is cured of this misplaced attachment, she will turn to my heart for a refuge, as she has said herself, and then she will prove the strength and unselfishness of a true love. Yes, I can wait."

Poor man! he fed his hungry heart with chaff. He had yet to learn that when the soul has once been touched with the divine flame, like Orpheus it will follow its Eurydice even into the Stygian realm, and if the cruel Fates forbid their union, it will sit pining apart, singing its complaints to dumb nature, which is often more sympathizing than the dull cold heart of man. No other love will fill the void; no other can hold intercourse with the lonely, isolated soul. It desires and pines for one voice only, one smile, one touch that will draw music from a chord silent to all others. More than blest are those whom the gods love, and unite early in the Elysian fields, where they may roam together throughout eternity.

It is truly a wearisome and intricate task to follow through all its perplexing windings the vagaries of the human heart. Sometimes we feel a sort of impatient pain be-

cause those we love cannot shield themselves from suffering. If they have been wounded once, and that wound has healed, why should they allow the dart to pierce them the second time? Such thoughts passed through the mind of Madame Landel, as she noticed with anxiety that Constance's old restlessness was returning. She was no longer the calm, happy girl she had been during the first weeks of their arrival in Rome. A constant change of purpose; a constant desire to do something different, to visit some new scene, to find some new excitement; a feverish restlessness, that would not allow her to sit quietly with her books and drawing; neither did her hitherto beloved study of music afford her any enjoyment, it seemed to have lost its charm. Suddenly, only giving as a reason that she was tired, she discontinued her lessons, and scarcely ever sang. She avoided as much as possible the society of Lady Dinsmore and Florence, because Guido spent most of his time with them. She passed whole days in the early part of the spring wandering through the picture-galleries with Madame Landel.

One day she sat in the Corsini Palace before those three marvellous pictures, the Ecce Homos of Guido, Guercino, and Carlo Dolce, studying with sad, tearful eyes each impressive face of the dying Christ.

"Tell me, please," she said, turning to Madame Landel, "which picture do you prefer?"

"I can scarcely explain my impressions; but say, my dear, what are yours?"

"I find," she said, "in the head of the Guercino, too much of human suffering. The Christ is a dying gladiator who only feels the agony of physical pain. The thorns pierce and fret the quivering brow, and the whole strong nature seems about giving way under the accumulation of bodily suffering. The Carlo Dolce is the type of an exhausted, worn man, weak and feeble, with infinite sweetness and patience in every line of his almost effeminate face. He seems to say, 'See how lamb-like I bear my buffeting, my scourging, my thorns!' The weary head sinks on the quiet breast; beneath the downcast lids gather the tears of tender sorrow; he bows, he succumbs; in unappealing submission to the Divine will. Now look at the Guido, feebler perhaps in drawing, poor in color; but the divinity of the God-man is stamped in every line. He does not feel the piercing thorns, the nails, the spear. The firm, but sweetly suffering lips seem to say, 'I die to atone for the sins of the world. On me rests the burden of every agonized human heart, in all time past, in all time to come. I die as a man, but I endure as a God.' The artist has not tried to touch the coarser nature with streaming blood and quivering wounds; he has striven to portray rather the mental than the physical suffering of the Son of God, and in that he has succeeded while the other two have failed. Therefore to me, although the Guercino is the most forcible, and according to all rules of art the finest picture, yet the Guido is beyond comparison the most powerful."

"You have expressed my opinion, dear, better than I could have done myself, although I have seldom dared disagree with the decision of competent critics, that the Guercino is the best picture."

"The best is not what appeals to the eye, it is what touches the heart. Look at this ill-drawn Virgin of Fra Angelico,—gentle creature. She is poor and ignorant, she has walked over the rough paths of life, her hands are hard with toil; but her heart is as soft and innocent as the mysterious child upon her knee. In her eye is an expression of holy awe and love, on her lip a smile of divine sweetness and reserve. What a contrast to the common dark woman, with passionate eyes, and hard bold face, which Murillo has chosen for his type! Verily the man's life is stamped upon his work. Fra Angelico in his convent cell, without an earthly model, working from the ideal he had formed in his pure heart, achieved more than Murillo with the teaching of nearly three centuries of improvement. How can a man whose life is stained by contact with the world select for his model a type of sensual beauty, and leave upon his picture, which he names a Madonna, any impress of divine purity and innocence?"

The hours spent in the study of these creations of immortal genius were the most peaceful Constance experienced. Scarcely a day passed that she did not say to Madame Landel, "Let us go to some gallery for a few hours." She spent much time at St. Peter's and the Vatican, where she would gaze with enraptured eyes at the Transfiguration, which so beautifully combines the touching story of man's impotence and helpless suffering with the power and love of God. Or she would wander, with a sort of aimlessness, through the tapestried halls and pictured *stanze* of the immortal master; often too preoccupied with her own sad thoughts to fully understand their beauties. Sometimes she knelt before the high altar under the vast dome, and raised her tearful eyes to the pictured saints above, as though she would invoke their aid to help her bear the burden of life, which at times seemed unendurable. Again she would bow her head in self-abasement, and murmur, "God forgive me that I complain, and weakly suffer this passion to fill all my life. Give me strength that I may conquer this fatal love, or I shall sink into deeper sorrow and despair."

No one but Madame Landel dreamed of the struggle that was passing in the poor girl's heart. Outwardly she strove to appear happy, and in the presence of Guido, whom she avoided as much as possible, she wore her visor of pride, which rendered her face inscrutable. Still, since the night she had thrown herself, half unconscious with terror, into his arms, Guido had been happier; he felt she loved him, and he sometimes dared to hope that she might yet be his wife. The deep friendship and evident interest of Lady Dinsmore in every concern of his life made him feel that, with her influence in his favor, even the disgrace of his birth might be forgotten. Still he was too proud and sensitive to risk the displeasure of Constance by a proposal that she might consider presuming, even though she loved him. He did not know that love eventually levels all barriers and distinctions, ennobling the object, no matter how unworthy.

The lovely winter months passed away, and the tide of time bore them to the verge of spring.

Filomena was still absent on her useless quest. Sometimes Benedetto showed to Guido an ill-spelled scrawl, written by some public *scrivone*, in which she would express a hope that in the next town or city she might find or hear something from her child.

A letter from Mr. Vandeleur to Constance, dated Florence, told her he had returned from France, where he had failed to find any trace of De Villiers. He spoke of clouds already darkening the political horizon of Italy; and said that the murmuring sea, and the murmuring wind, and the unquiet heart of man all joined in the same cry, "It is time some one died for Italy!"

"I cannot," he said, "take part in a struggle that will only rivet anew the chains of those who groan in bondage; for Italy free, for Italy a republic, I would gladly give my worthless life. Where the powers of darkness struggle together, there will be suffering humanity, and there is my place, independent of party, power, or faction. I must be ready to alleviate pain, to nurse the sick and wounded, to aid the poor, to feed the hungry, to put the cup of cold water to the dying lips, whether it be of friend or foe. The reparation I would make to one who I fear is lost to me forever, I must make to all mankind. Pray for me, my cherished friend, my good angel, that God may accept it."

Constance wept when she read the letter, and thought, "While this man, to whom I pointed out the path of duty, is heroically trying to conquer self, and atone for a past sin, I am idly folding my hands and luxuriating in a sorrow that is unworthy of me"

Then she took a sudden whim, as Mrs. Tremaine said, to become a ministering angel; for, at the risk of taking the fever, she dragged poor Madame Landel into horribly dirty lanes and alleys to seek for the suffering poor, which she found in abundance; sent bread and wine, soup and meat; gave away unheedingly any number of *baiocchi* to the miserable herd of *ragazzi* that surrounded her; and one day astonished the woman who clipped dogs on the Spanish steps by slipping a five-franc piece into her hand, for which extraordinary performance all the blessings of the Santa Madonna were showered upon her head. "I cannot do much," she would say, "but if a little money can aid these poor creatures, they shall have it willingly."

Poor restless heart! she longed to do something whereby she might gain peace. She denied herself her greatest pleasure, — that of attending the Catholic ceremonies where Guido sang, and went instead to the Protestant Church, where the impressive service was badly read, the singing a farce, and the sermon a combination of dogmatic platitudes, that did not touch her heart into reverence, as did the pictured saints, the ascending incense, and the glorious music at St. Peter's. Still she felt it to be her duty, and so she struggled through it with a sort of dreary longing for one of her dear father's sermons, thinking, "O, if I could but sit in the old church at Helmsford, and look into his serene face, that never was stern or cold to me!"

Toward the last of April the warm weather came on, and they began to discuss their plans for the summer. Lady Dinsmore found the health of Florence improving so rapidly under the influence of the soft climate that she resolved to remain abroad another year. Very often she said, "I wish to spend the summer in one of the lovely villas that surround the Bay of Naples"; so it was decided that the two families should unite, and hire for the summer Sans Souci, — a pleasantly situated villa half-way between Castelamare and Sorento, on one of the lovely heights that overlook the fairest spot on earth, the enchanting Bay of Naples.

Lady Dinsmore had invited Guido and Mr. Carnegie to visit her, and when she said to Mrs. Tremaine, with her usual care for the happiness of others, "Shall I invite the Prince?" much to her surprise, Helen, turning a little pale, replied, "No, thank you, I would rather you did not; it is much better that he should not be invited."

"But, my dear, you have become so accustomed to his society, can you be happy without it?"

"I must endeavor to be so," she said, in a hard, cold tone, "for I am not likely to have much of it in the future." Then, turning impulsively to Lady Dinsmore, she

took her hand in hers and kissed it. "O how good you are! If I could only be like you!"

"My dear girl, I have suffered, and I understand your sorrow. I pity you, and wish it were in my power to make you happy. You are right; if you must part, it is better to do so at once." Then with tearful eyes she kissed Mrs. Tremaine's cheek, and said softly, "Cheer up, dear heart, you will not be unhappy always. Time will heal the wound."

"Or Death will gently touch it with his cold finger, and it will cease to bleed," replied Helen.

CHAPTER XXX.

ALL IS OVER BETWEEN US FOREVER.

MRS. TREMAINE sat before the dressing-table in her room. Her watch lay open near her, and her eyes were fixed upon it with a strange, agonized expression.

"Nearly three o'clock," she said, with an inflection of despair in her voice. "In ten minutes he will be here. Then my happiness ends, and I must begin to bear the weight of a ruined life. Ten minutes more and I must say farewell to this sweet dream, I must engage in a conflict which will be the transition from bliss to misery. With my own lips I must utter the words that will be the death-warrant to my happiness. With my own hand I must put away the scarcely tasted cup of joy. Forever, forever, as long as God burdens me with weary days and sleepless nights, I shall bear about with me a wound, a blight, that none must know of; and I must live a constant lie. O the weariness of hypocrisy and deceit! If in all the future I could wear sackcloth, and sit in the ashes and weep, life would be more endurable. Three o'clock," and she pushed away her watch, and started up paler than death as she heard a servant approaching her door.

"The Prince is in the *salon*, Signora."

"Say I will be with him directly."

She glanced at the mirror, arranging her waves of gold. She would be as lovely as possible, that the memory of her beauty might haunt every hour of his future life.

"Heavens! how pale I am!" and she rubbed her cheeks with feverish energy to redden a little their almost ghastly whiteness. Then, adjusting the delicate lace around her throat, and smoothing the abundant folds of her pale blue dress, she left the room with a calm, proud step.

Something of the courageous despair of Sappho, mingled with the sorrow of Iphigenia, filled her heart with a stern resolve to meet this man, and then and there to put an end forever to this chapter of her life by sacrificing her happiness to the worldly interest of the one she loved.

He arose and took her hand as she entered the *salon*, and, looking into her lovely face, said softly, "*Carissima mia*, you do not meet me with a smile."

She drew away, and, leaning against a marble console, as though she could derive some strength from contact with the cold stone, she said, in a voice of forced calmness, "Prince Conti, do you know why I have asked for this interview to-day?"

The blood mounted to his handsome face as he replied, "How should I know what has induced you to grant me such a pleasure?"

"It is because to-morrow I leave Rome, as you already know, and I would take my last farewell of you."

"Your last farewell!" he repeated, vaguely. "I beseech you to choose some other subject for pleasantry."

"I assure you this is not a pleasantry, I am most solemnly in earnest. From this hour all is over between us forever."

A mortal paleness overspread his face. "Then you have never loved me?"

"I have loved you."

"And you love me no more?"

"Yes, I love you, and I shall love you until my heart is stilled forever."

"Then, Helen, why must we part? I love you deeply. I love you as I can never love another. Why must we part?"

"Because," she replied, in the same voice of forced calmness, "as dearly as I love you, I love my honor still more. Our names are already connected. And the cruel misjudging world orders this parting, or I must pay the penalty of a ruined reputation."

"Ah," he said, with something of scorn in his voice, "there can be little love in this cold worldly prudence."

"Look at me, Ortensio." She drew nearer, and, laying her soft white hand on his arm, she raised her blue eyes to his. "Look in my face, and tell me if you see aught but truth there, and do not dare to say I have never loved you. I would willingly lay my dead body in the dust at your feet if over it you could walk to fortune and fame. I am young, and you say beautiful. If I might die in your arms this moment, I would say to the darkness and corruption of the grave, 'Behold your sister!' I would welcome with joy the great consoler, and his cold breath would be the kiss of peace. What am I to do in all the dreary years to come? How am I to live without your voice, your smile? O that my heart would die within me, and feel no more this corroding pain! But it will live;

like a poor body half palsied, it will live only to be conscious of its suffering."

"O Helen!" he cried, falling at her feet and covering her hands with tears and kisses, "do not say we must part. We need not part. Be my wife. With thee I will forget my poverty; happy in thy love, I will forget my ruin. I will labor for thee. In some other land far from here I will cease to remember that the blood of the princes of Conti flows in my veins. I will forget the lost palaces of my ancestors, and my base wish to regain them at the cost of my happiness and the integrity of my manhood. No; a desire so unworthy of me has passed away forever. Everything in comparison with thy love is insignificant. With thee life will have enough of joy. I can well dispense with wealth."

"Dear Ortensio," she said, leaning her golden head on his shoulder, and laying her arm around his neck, "dear noble darling, I am proud that you are superior to the selfishness the world accredits to you. In this moment I love you as I never have before, because now I know how true and strong your heart is. Now I find you above the avarice which I feared was the only blot on a being the most perfect God ever created."

Adoring woman! Even while she spoke, if she could have looked into the heart of her lover, she would have seen that a gloomy reaction had already taken place. For scarcely had his lips repeated the words which his cooler judgment told him were ruin to his prospects before he repented having made an offer which he never for one moment doubted would be accepted. But his fond, passionate eyes, as they looked into hers, did not betray his secret; neither did his voice, as he repeated, with every variation of tenderness, the expressive terms of endearment with which his lovely language abounds.

For one moment Helen leaned on his breast in a sort of ecstatic dream. For one moment their lips met in a kiss of deep, fervent passion; and then, white and cold, she drew away from his encircling arms, and stood with clasped hands and compressed lips, looking at him. He came near her, to fold her again to his heart, but she waved him away.

"No, no," she said, with a sickly smile; "no more weakness, for I have much need of strength. Did you think, my darling, for one moment, that I could accept your sacrifice, that I could be the weight to drag you down? No, no, I love you too well for that. I love you better than myself or my own happiness. And it is because I love you that I can never be your wife."

He interrupted her with passionate protestations.

"Hush!" she said, almost sternly, "hush, and let me speak! I understand you better than you understand yourself. A moment of weakness has betrayed you into saying what your cooler judgment would condemn. I am comparatively poor. I could not assist you to maintain the position to which you were born; neither could I endure to see you grow weary day by day, your brow contract and lower with gloomy care, your gay, happy nature change with regret and disappointment. You talk of labor in another land! O my poor darling! what do you know of dull, uninteresting labor?—you, a child of the South; born to sport like a butterfly on the breeze of prosperity! Heretofore poverty has been but a name to you. You have lived in elegance on the remnants of the glory of your ancestors. But gradually it is diminished, until the future has little to give you. You must look to another source for wealth. There are many women, rich, lovely, and young, who will gladly ally themselves to your noble name, and through whom you can redeem your lost estates. Unfortunately I have not wealth; for with wealth I could make you happy, but without it I should make you miserable. Therefore you see I cannot be your wife, and we must part."

"O Helen!" he exclaimed, with a feeling of mingled relief and sorrow, "why do you torture me so? If, as you say, you cannot be my wife, why need we part? Cannot we love each other the same?"

She looked at him a moment, flushing and paling. Then, tossing back the waves of gold from her brow, and drawing her queenly figure to its full height, while a glance of scorn flashed from under her white lids, she replied, "You are the Prince Conti, and I am simply Mrs. Tremaine, the daughter of a poor English officer. But I am very proud, and my fair fame is more precious to me than my love. Already the charitable world has united our names not any too kindly. An entire and irrevocable separation is the only thing that can stop the vile mouth of slander. You, as well as myself, must see the necessity of this. Whether in the future we are entirely apart from each other, or whether we may meet in society, I am to you henceforth only Mrs. Tremaine, and you to me are the Prince Conti; never again Helen and Ortensio, two loving, passionate souls, that have met together for a few brief, blissful hours, only to be separated by the cruel circumstances of life. I think you have loved me, and I believe you will love me. But you are strong enough to wear the iron mask, to hide beneath the joy of life whatever you may feel of regret and sorrow. And I, Ortensio, I will forever bless the fate that brought us together. I have loved.

Through you and with you, I have known as much of happiness in this brief time as usually falls to the lot of mortals. I have feasted with the gods. I have drunk the wine of the grapes of Eden. I have eaten of the fruit ripened under the walls of Paradise. The amaranth and the asphodel have crowned for a moment my brow, and henceforth I am immortal. Shall I then murmur, now the feast is finished, because it did not last forever? No, no; it has been, and that is enough. The memory of it will be a singing bird that will nestle forever in my heart. I cannot agree with Tennyson, that 'a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things.' How I shall suffer, God only knows; but there will be moments when the gentle showers will refresh the burning soil of my heart, and buds and blossoms will spring into life fragrant with the odor of the past. And who knows," she said, pressing her hand to her heart, with a little shiver, "who knows if it will be long. I think, in the years to come, when you are sitting in your gloomy old palace with your stately wife at your side, and your children reverently surrounding you, the golden hair of poor Helen Tremaine will have been soiled with grave-mould many a year."

"Hush, Helen! Have pity on me!" he cried, with passionate sobs. "You break my heart. We cannot part, we shall both be miserable forever. No, I swear to you, if you will not be my wife, to remain as I am. You are the only woman I love, and I will have no other."

She smiled in his face, and, taking his hand in hers, pressed her soft lips upon it, while the large tears rolled over her cheeks. "Now farewell, darling! God bless you! May you be very happy with some good noble woman!"

He clasped her in his arms, and said in a voice choked with emotion, "Why this sad farewell? One would think we were never to meet again."

"We may meet again, Ortensio, but not as now. This is the last time my head will ever lie upon your breast unless it is in death. If you are near me, I shall pray to die in your arms."

She clung to him, silently sobbing. Perhaps each felt with prophetic force that it was indeed the last time heart would throb against heart, warm with life and love. For their faces were as solemn, when they parted, as though they had been in the presence of death.

The Prince looked gloomy and thoughtful as he walked down the Corso at an unusually languid pace, toward the Café di Roma, where he had an appointment with some of the young nobility, never heeding the lovely faces that smiled at him from the line of carriages that were rolling down the Pincio.

"What can be the matter with Conti?" exclaimed a gay *donna*. "He looks most disconsolate."

"*Certamente* he has proposed, and *la bella bionda* has refused him," replied her companion.

It was true he was very unhappy, but only at the thought of parting from Mrs. Tremaine for what he believed to be a few months; he consoled himself by thinking that she would return to Rome the next winter. She loved him, and all would be renewed; women were always a little sensational; perhaps it was gotten up to make their brief parting more effective, for she surely could not mean entirely what she said. "But she is a splendid creature; few would have had the courage to refuse me, for fear I should never ask them again. She is the first disinterested woman I ever met. I wonder if she suspected my feelings. However, I was sincere when I said I loved her; but she is right, my love could not stand the test of poverty. *Per Bacco!* if she were rich I would marry her at once, but, as it is, I cannot. Yet there is no reason, because we can't marry at present, that we should not see each other the same as we have done. Perhaps, now, she meant what she said; but she never will have strength to keep to such a resolve; women never are strong."

Mrs. Tremaine tottered to her room; life, hope, joy, all seemed to have left her suddenly and forever. She closed the door, sank into a chair, and, burying her face in the pillows of her bed, sat without motion, sob, or sigh. "It is the beginning of the half-life," she thought, "the deadness and stupor of the soul, the reaction that follows a strong excitement, the sensation of a body thrust from a great height, that feels no pain at first because of the numbness produced by the force of the shock. I do not realize it quite at this moment, I shall suffer more in the time to come. Now I seem to hear his voice, I feel the clasp of his arms around me, my face is yet warm with his tender kisses. The agony will be in the future, when I shall hunger and thirst for his voice, when I shall pine for his smile. Ah! I know the time will come when I would willingly give half the years of my life for one caress. But why think of this? It is finished. All is over forever. He is as dead to me for the future as though the grave had hidden him." She arose, and walked slowly back and forth, pressing her hand to her side, while a dreary smile trembled around her lips, — a smile like that we sometimes see on the face of the dead.

"This pain is a premonition of peace. I think I shall not suffer long, and he will always see me before him, as I was in the glow of my youth and beauty; others will change

and grow old, but I shall always be young to him; I shall always be golden-haired Helen Tremaine, 'sweet Helen,' as he so often named me."

She repeated the words with a lingering tenderness, as though she derived some consolation from them. Pausing before a vase from which drooped some blue campanula that he had gathered for her from a ruin the day before, she took them from the water, and, pressing them reverently to her lips, folded them in his last note to her, and laid them in the bottom of her desk.

"Poor little flowers!" she said, "you bloomed amid ruin and desolation until he gathered you to place you upon my breast. You are delicate, you are lovely, your color speaks of fidelity. Yes, I will be faithful, too faithful, to a memory."

Perhaps a resemblance to her own fate crossed her mind, as she laid them away, withered and faded, hidden forever from the wooing kisses of the breeze and the sun.

Although she had decided long before that this hour must come, that nothing could induce her to become the wife of Prince Conti, even if he wished it with all the fervency and forgetfulness of a *grande passion*, yet, now that he had accepted her refusal, there was a mingled feeling of regret and disappointment because he had done so; but the thought never for a moment dawned upon her mind, that perhaps, after all, her idol's feet might be clay. No, she could make all necessary excuses for his supreme selfishness and avarice; for love always invests its object with a thousand noble attributes to which it has no claims.

It would have been better if she could have believed him less perfect; but as it was, she enshrined him in her heart as the reality of the most beautiful ideal a romantic woman ever portrayed.

CHAPTER XXXI.

WHY?

THE dinner-bell rang and Mrs. Tremaine hastened to arrange her dress. Lady Dinsmore, Florence, Mr. Carnegie, and Guido dined with them this last day, and she must take her place among them as usual. "Now," she said, with a heart-breaking sigh, "I must put on my mask, never to lay it aside one moment in the presence of others. The world shall not say that Helen Tremaine is dying for love. Happily I shall not always be with the world. There will be hours when I can be by myself, — hours of silence and loneliness, when I can weep and moan unheeded. But no, I must not weep, for tears leave their traces, and nothing betrays a hidden sorrow like red eyelids, and ruins one's beauty so. If I mourn, the world will not know it; for it will be my heart that will weep tears of blood. There," she added, glancing at the mirror, "none will imagine I have come out of great tribulation. There are no signs of it on my face; my mask fits well and conceals all." So, with her usual light step and gay smile, she entered the drawing-room. Constance, Guido, and Florence were at a table, sorting and arranging some photographic views of Rome, while they laughed and chatted over the probable adventures of their next day's journey. Lady Dinsmore, Madame Landel, and Mr. Carnegie were talking seriously of the political state of the country; and Mr. Carnegie held in his hand a journal, from which he had just read an account of the insurrection at Parma.

"We certainly could not go north at present," said Lady Dinsmore; "how fortunate that we have arranged to spend the summer in the south! I think there is no part of Italy where we shall be safer."

"Do you believe we shall be able to enter Rome in the autumn?" inquired Madame Landel, with some anxiety.

"O certainly," replied Mr. Carnegie. "The northern Adriatic states will be the scene of the conflict. Rome will not be attacked at present; the time has not come. The Papal states must be gradually diminished by uniting them to Italy before they can dare hope to add Rome. This stronghold of the Pope will stand in solitary grandeur many a year."

"But eventually it must succumb," said Lady Dinsmore.

"Yes, eventually, but not yet; the time has not come."

"Dinner is waiting, Constance," said Madame Landel; and they all entered the dining-room.

"Please don't talk any more of political troubles," exclaimed Mrs. Tremaine, as they seated themselves at the table. "Let us be merry, for who knows if we shall all dine together again!"

"Now you have started a subject for sad thoughts; how unlike you!" said Mr. Carnegie, smiling gently as he helped her to a glass of Orvieto.

"Certainly we shall all dine together very soon, — shall we not, mamma?" inquired Florence. "Mr. Carnegie and Signor Guido have promised to come to us in three weeks; then what merry times we shall have! O the boating, bathing, and the donkey-riding! Won't it all be delightful?"

"O the sand-flies and the mosquitoes and the burning sun!" said Mrs. Tremaine, laughing. "I doubt if we shall find our paradise anything but earth."

"Ah, that is because the Prince won't be there!" retorted Florence, thoughtlessly.

The expression of Mrs. Tremaine's face never changed as she said lightly, "But perhaps some other destroying angel will deign to alight in our midst. Lady Charlotte told me yesterday that the young Duke of Fitzhaven, whom you admire so much, intends spending the summer in Sorento."

"O, that will be jolly! what a gay party we shall have!"

And so in light *badinage* the dinner passed off, and no one but Mr. Carnegie noticed that Mrs. Tremaine sent away plate after plate almost untasted.

An hour afterward they were gathered around the piano for a farewell "concert," as Florence called it. Guido had just finished playing that exquisite but incomprehensible *Warum?* of Schumann.

"*Warum?*—what does it mean?" inquired Mrs. Tremaine, who did not understand German.

"Why," replied Constance.

"Why," laughed Mrs. Tremaine; "why did he write it? and why did he call it Why?"

"Because," said Mr. Carnegie, "at the time he wrote it he was desperately in love with Clara Weeks, whom he could not marry. I suppose what he intended to demand by that passionate outburst was, 'Why cannot I marry the woman I love?' It is said to have had the desired effect, for it so softened the hitherto obdurate heart of her father that he at once gave his consent to the marriage, and the unfortunate Robert Schumann was made happy after much patient waiting." And Mr. Carnegie glanced shyly at Helen.

"Yet his happiness seems to have come almost too late," observed Guido; "for the sorrow of his life weighed so heavily on his sensitive temperament that it accelerated the mental disease which terminated his brilliant career so early."

"Ah," said Lady Dinsmore, with a strange pathos in her voice, "how many rebellious, unsatisfied souls have wailed out almost in the same despairing tones, 'Why? why?'" But little she thought, among the seven persons present, four unhappy, suffering hearts were even in that moment silently asking Why?

"Why," thought Constance, "has fate separated me from the only person I can ever love?" and Guido, lost in thought, put the same question to his own heart. "And why," mentally ejaculated Mr. Carnegie, why cannot I win the love of this divine creature?" And the divine creature, her mind a prey to the most torturing thoughts, her soul filled with rebellion and sorrow, almost cried aloud in her sharp anguish, "Why has this cruel destiny cut me off forever from hope and peace?"

How many pale lips and streaming eyes have been uplifted to Him who hears forever, as the voice of many waters, the murmuring of suffering humanity, rolling wave-like into his presence the innumerable whys of every questioning heart! And he, the Son, who sitteth near the Father, in that dark hour when he knelt in the grove of Gethsemane, crying, in the extreme of mental anguish, "Why cannot this cup pass from me?" bore in that moment the burden of all the whys that have fallen from each human heart in all time.

And doth he not often, he the divine, whisper to us who are listening for the still, small voice, "Wait, I see the end from the beginning. Life is solving for thee the problem, and my Father will answer thy questions in his own good time"?

"What shall I sing?" said Guido at length, raising his eyes to Constance with earnest inquiry.

"I am not in the mood to choose," she replied; "and if I were, my selection might not please the others. I am very sad at this moment." She spoke in a low voice, and the words fell from her lips before she was aware of how much meaning they might contain. An eloquent glance shot arrow-like to her heart, as Guido turned over the music and selected the simple but exquisite *Addio* of Schubert, and his loving heart looked from his eyes as he sang with touching expression,—

"Addio mio bene, addio donna del primo amor."

"Bravo!" exclaimed Mr. Carnegie, when he had finished. "If we were a fashionable audience in a London concert room, your fortune and reputation would be made beyond a doubt."

Guido smiled his thanks, but he did not covet the applause of a London audience; he only sang to one heart, and if that had understood him it was enough, he was more than contented.

As Constance bade him good night, and good by for a time, he fancied there was a little warmth in the light pressure of her hand, and a little tenderness in the smile that lingered around her mouth; however, he went to his room happier than he had been for a long time, kissed his ivory crucifix with more devotion than usual, repeated more than his usual number of paternosters, and looked with a little more than religious affection at his pictured Madonna, which he fancied resembled Constance, and then slept calmly and peacefully.

Mrs. Tremaine being in her room, her necessity for acting was laid aside with her evening dress, and no longer compelled her to smile; her lips were compressed, her brow was contracted, her face set, and white as snow under moonlight. Her golden hair

unbound and falling over her like a veil, she paced to and fro in the dimly lighted room like a lovely restless spirit. No tears, no wringing of the hands, no bursting sobs; only the blue eyes looked forth into the night, a deep longing agony in their gaze. The little hands were pressed hot and dry against her throbbing heart, and now and then she tottered as though weariness or weakness were gaining upon her. One o'clock, two o'clock, three o'clock; all are silent, the world is lapped in repose, she pauses like one exhausted with a long march, and, throwing herself heavily into a chair, she says, "O, I hoped weariness of body would bring sleep, but it will not. And I must sleep, or I shall have no strength for to-morrow."

Taking a small phial from her dressing-table, she poured a few drops of a dark liquid into a glass of water. After drinking it she threw herself on her bed, and was almost immediately wrapped in a profound slumber.

CHAPTER XXXII.

BY THE SEA.

ON the beach near a little hamlet between Sinigaglia and Ancona sat a group of fishermen. The day was nearly done; the yellow sun dropping down behind the Apennines flung rainbow tints over the sea, and lighted up the bronzed faces of the sailors. Their day's labor was over; their boats were drawn up on the shore for the night, the red and orange sails flapping loosely against the masts, which were painted in rings of many colors. The brown, weather-stained planks, fastened with nails that time and much dragging over the sand had worn to a silvery brightness; the patches of red, white, and green; the rude figure-head of the Madonna; the Latin inscription around the painted bow, in black letters on a white ground; the festoons of rags of unnamable shades; the stones of the beach golden in the yellow light; the background of clay hovels, and the hills behind clothed with the gray green of the olive and the tender green of the vine; on the right the fortressed heights of Ancona, and on the left the picturesque, sombre old town of Sinigaglia; the group of rough rugged sailors, their short linen trousers and blue shirts, their brown muscular limbs, their straight clear-cut features, piercing eyes, and black, uncombed hair falling from under their red caps; their naturally expressive positions as they lounged against the boats, smoking, and gesticulating violently while they talked; the women standing near with folded arm listening in stately silence; the children rolling and tumbling in the foam that gently lapped the shore; a tiny boat, with a single boatman standing in the bow, and using his one oar with peculiar grace and power, rose and fell, a toy on the inrolling waves, but nevertheless came swiftly and surely toward the shore; the glorious rays of the sun lighting and gilding all with wondrous beauty, — formed a picture, the color and arrangement of which would have delighted Vernet, and which only his pencil could have rendered with strength and fidelity.

"*Sant' Antonio mio!*" exclaimed a fierce, wild-looking man, the oldest of the party, starting up and pacing the beach with long furious strides. "Let them come, the *Francesi* and *Tedeschi;* we will give them enough before they finish. They shall have hot work, — ay, as hot as the *inferno*. It will give strength to every true Italian to know he is cutting down one of these cursed invaders. A malediction on them! may they perish by the plague and the sword!"

"*Figlio mio!*" said he, addressing a boy of sixteen, who stood gazing at him with wide-open eyes, "will you fight for Italy?"

"Yes," replied the boy, eagerly; "but I would rather fight with Garibaldi."

"*Sì, sì, caro Garibaldi.* But let us drive out these cursed *forestieri* that are eating up the land, and then his time will come. Let Italy be united before she can be free. If we had Garibaldi for a leader, instead of Cialdini, we should fight with one heart, every man would die for him."

"Yes, every man would die for him!" they all exclaimed.

"Ah, he *is* a hero," said a young man, with eyes of fire. "Do you remember the story his men told of him when he was fighting down in Calabria? After the battle the officers looked for their general, but he was missing; and where do you think they found him?"

"Where? where?" inquired all.

"Why, on the ground with his tired soldiers, his head on a saddle, and a crust of black bread that he was too tired to eat clasped in his hand, and there he was sleeping like a child."

When the speaker finished, they all shouted "*Bravo! viva Garibaldi!*"

"Have you heard this story?" said another; but what it was they did not wait to hear, for one of the women exclaimed, "*Il Signore! il Signore!*" and darted away toward a tall man who was coming down the beach. He was thin and pale, with a long grizzled beard and gentle blue eyes. His coarse gray suit had a careless, neglected look, but the fine white linen and small hands and feet betrayed the gentleman. In his arms he carried a little brown

spaniel, that looked in his face with most loving eyes, as he addressed it from time to time in terms of affection that it evidently understood. He had scarcely reached the group when he was surrounded by all the women and children, each clamoring for some mark of favor; while the men arose, and, pulling off their red caps, bowed respectfully, and one, covering a rock with a coarse blanket, asked him to sit and rest.

"But first, *Signore*, come to the cottage and see my little Beppo," said a haggard, swarthy woman; "he has cried for you all day, *povero bambino*, and I can do nothing with him, he only asks for *il Signore*."

"My poor Angela is dying, *figlio mio*," trembled out an old white-haired man, hobbling up and taking hold of his coat timidly. "Will you come and say a word to her? She would rather see you than the *curato*."

"Yes, yes, in a moment, Giuseppe, but let me go to the poor baby first. I have brought some medicine, which he must have directly."

"Bless you!" replied the woman, clasping his hand and kissing it. "Perhaps he may live."

"*Speriamo*," he said gently, as he turned toward the cottage, followed by all the children.

There on a few dirty rags lay a little emaciated creature, with eyes like great spots of ink on a sheet of blank paper; he smiled in the man's face, and held out his arms for the little dog.

"But Beppo must take the medicine first," he said, raising the child, and putting the cup to his lips. The boy made a very wry face, but heroically gulped down the bitter draught, and then pressed the little spaniel in his arms with delight. After exchanging a few kind words with the mother, and laying a little money and some oranges on the dirty deal table, he said he would go to Angela, and take the dog as he returned.

Passing along a little farther, he came to a hovèl so low that he was obliged to stoop to enter, and there lay a creature almost hideous in her ghastly old age. Yet a smile of pleasure flitted over her face, and stirred the skin that hung like wrinkled paper, as he took her horny black fingers in his, and asked her kindly if she were better.

"No, no, *Signor mio*, Angela will never be any better until the *Santa Madonna* smiles on her, and bids her come to her. She has been waiting so long, for ten suffering years, but *pazienza*, the end will come soon. Now tell me a little about the *Santo Cristo* when he was on earth. The *curato* tells me I must pray and do penances because my Lord is angry with me, but you tell me he loves me; then pray to him that my poor soul may have a short punishment in purgatory."

"My poor woman, I am a sinner like you, and can do little for your soul; pray to Christ yourself, he will hear you," he said curtly but kindly, as he laid a flask of wine and some money on the bed, and turned away.

The men surrounded him on the beach with innumerable eager questions about the political state of the country; for as none of them could read, they depended entirely on verbal accounts, which often came to them incorrect and exaggerated; but whatever information he gave them they knew they could rely on.

"When will the Italian troops march upon Ancona? Is there a large pontifical army in the field? Where will the first engagement take place that will free Umbria and the Marches? Will Garibaldi attack Rome during the absence of the Pope's troops?" and many more such questions, all of which he answered to the best of his knowledge.

A handsome but melancholy-looking young man, who had stood apart during the conversation, with his eyes fixed gloomily on the ground, now turned, and, with a heavy sigh, walked down to the edge of the beach, and looked sadly out on the sea.

"What is it, Antonio?" and a hand was laid kindly on the dirty sleeve of the blue jacket.

"*O Madre di Dio*," he replied, with almost a sob, "I am very miserable; we were to be married, Francesca and I, the next *festa;* but now it can't be when we hoped, and the *Santa Madonna* only knows if it ever will be."

"For what reason, my poor Antonio?"

"*Ah, Signor mio*, I am so poor; I had saved enough money in six years to buy a few things for my cottage and to pay the *curato*, but last week, when we had the heavy storm, my boat went adrift and was lost, *povera barchetta*. So I must take all the money I have put aside to buy another, and I must work six years more before I can save enough to marry. My Francesca does nothing but weep, for her father is dead, and she is alone."

"*Coraggio!* Antonio, you are a good lad, I will help you; how much money do you need to make you happy?"

The young man raised his splendid eyes to the kind face, and said, while a glow of surprise and joy flushed his brown cheek, "*O Signore!* you are very good; but it is a great deal, it is thirty *scudi!*"

"Come to me to-morrow, and you shall have it."

Antonio dropped on his knees and rained tears and kisses on the hand of his benefactor, who turned away with moist eyes, amid a torrent of thanks.

He took his little dog from the arms of Beppo's mother, for the child had fallen into a gentle slumber; and, followed by thanks and blessings, Richard Vandeleur turned, in the gathering twilight, to walk back by the shore to Ancona. The moon rose large and cloudless, and threw long lines of trembling light over the sea. The perpetual murmurs of the sad Adriatic, mingled with the memory of the sorrows that pierce the hearts of God's humble creatures, filled his soul with tender melancholy, and the tears fell from his eyes, and dropped one by one on the soft hairs of the little spaniel that lay in his arms.

"O suffering humanity!" he thought, "O poor, worn, weary hearts, that lie under the iron heel of the oppressor, — ignorant toilers, who eat your black bread unmurmuringly, and bow your necks under the yoke like patient dumb beasts! are there aspirations in your breasts? are there desires for better things struggling in your simple souls? will time mature your hopes and strengthen your confidence? Alas! your country groans for deliverance, but the time of her travail is not yet come. More noble hearts must break, more fresh warm blood must bathe your soil, before the flower of freedom can spring forth and blossom."

Perched high on a lonely rock above his head was the convent of the Sacra Madre, and the nuns were singing their vespers. A voice, sweet and rich, but touched with a strange sorrow, floated out of the grated window of the little chapel, and fell through the still air down into the inmost depths of his heart, — a voice that brought back to him the memory of a moonlit sea, where he floated in a little bark, while his head rested fondly on a gentle bosom, a pair of glorious eyes looked love into his, and soft, tender fingers smoothed back the brown curls from his boyish brow. How long ago that was! The brown hair was streaked with gray; he was old and worn, older than his years; the youthful freshness and enthusiasm had all passed away forever; his heart never throbbed now with passion, only with keen, sharp sorrow; and that voice, and that warm, beating heart, he feared they were silent forever, at least, they were silent to him. "O moon and stars! O blue and shining sea! canst thou not tell me where she is? canst thou not lead me to her?"

But all the voice that replied to him out of the silence of the night was the murmur of the sea, like the plaint of invisible sorrows, and the sad sweet strain of the nuns singing their *Ave Maria*.

When he reached the town the Piazza dei Mercanti was already filled with a crowd, and the band was playing an inspiriting military air. Among the throng near the music-stand was a middle-aged woman, — a sad worn face, with a large red scar on her left cheek. She seemed restless and anxious, regarding every one with a curious scrutiny. As her gaze wandered over the mass of people, it fell on the face of Richard Vandeleur. In a moment she was at his side.

"Filomena," he exclaimed, "where have you come from?"

"I have been here several days," she replied sadly, "and I am now on my way home."

"Have you heard anything?" he inquired, with ill-concealed anxiety.

"Nothing," she said gloomily, "nothing; it is useless to continue the search; she cannot be living, or, if she is, she is lost to us."

"You look ill; come with me to the hotel, it is very near; we can talk there unobserved while you rest and take some supper."

"I *am* ill, worn out, and disheartened. I shall never find my child, never," she cried, with emotion.

"Be calm, try to control yourself until we reach my rooms."

She followed him to the hotel, but she scarcely tasted the abundant supper he set before her, preferring to tell him of all her wanderings. For six months she had searched in nearly every town in Italy, carried hither and thither by some idle report or suggestion, but all in vain.

"I have not found my poor Mona," she said, "and my Benedetto has need of me. I must go home to him, but I thought to have taken my child with me when I returned. It is impossible. I shall never see her again, never!"

"Do not despair entirely; I still have the hope that De Villiers will yet cross my path, and I will then wring the secret from his heart if it cost me my life."

A flush burned on his cheek, and the lion looked from under his bent brows. Then a sad, penitent expression succeeded, and he murmured, "O my God, that hellish hate is not yet dead within my heart! How can I hope for mercy when my soul is filled with that dark passion!"

"Can you still hope?" said the poor mother; "for me all hope is gone, my heart hopes no more," — and indeed her worn face and downcast eyes declared it.

"Yes, I still hope," replied Mr. Vandeleur. "I think I shall find her at last."

Opening his desk, he took from it a roll of bank-notes, and, laying aside the thirty *scudi* for Antonio, he gave the remainder to the woman. Then with many expressions of kindness he sent her away, telling her she was weary and had need of rest.

After she had gone he opened again his desk, and, taking from it a package of letters addressed to him in a scrawling childish hand, he read them over and over, pressing them to his lips and wetting them with his tears.

"Ah," he said, "it has needed all these years of suffering to soften my heart sufficiently to believe her innocent, and now, when at last the conviction has dawned upon me, it is too late to make any reparation. "But thank God, to-night I do feel that she was innocent, and if she lives she loves me still."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

SANS SOUCI.

"LOOK!" exclaimed Mrs. Tremaine to Florence one afternoon, as they stood on the *loggia* at Sans Souci, watching the vessels that glided by into the little *marina* below. "Look! there comes Fitzhaven's boat for the third time this week. You must be the attraction that brings him here. I should think Guido would be jealous."

"I am sure I don't want to see him," said Florence, blushing and pouting. "Mamma and I were going down to the beach to meet Guido, and now I shall not be able to go, because Fitzhaven will think I have come to welcome him, and I am not glad at all that he has come."

Constance sat under the shade of the trellis with a book in her hand, and as she listened to Florence's reply, she thought, "She certainly loves Guido; yes, she loves him! Dear child! I will never come between her and her happiness. If for a little time he fancied he cared for me, it is over now, and he is becoming very fond of Florence; they are always together, and Lady Dinsmore seems to encourage it."

At that moment Lady Dinsmore appeared on the *loggia*, her hat and parasol in her hand. "Are you ready, Florence, for your walk? and are you not going, girls? We promised Guido to come down and walk back with him after he had finished fishing."

"O, here they come!" exclaimed Helen, "Fitzhaven and Guido together, running and springing up the rocks like two goats."

"Guido never walks up the steps," said Florence, "unless he has mamma on his arm; he prefers coming up the shorter, steeper way; and he is so full of spirits here he does not seem at all as he did in Rome."

"Poor boy!" remarked Lady Dinsmore, looking down on the two young men as they came scrambling up the steep ascent, laughing and shouting. "He is free from the restraint of the priests' dress and their surveillance; no wonder he is happy. I hope he will never put his robes on again."

In a moment they appeared on the *loggia*, — Guido no longer dressed in black, sad and pale, but in a white linen suit, scarlet tie, and broad-brimmed straw hat; his face darkened by the sun, and his brown hair in curly disorder. He did indeed look different from the Guido of Rome.

But for some reason Constance preferred him in his gown and mantle, — pale and sad. She did not like to see him too happy, for then she thought he was not pining for her. Foolish girl! she should have known that those were the very happiest hours of his life because he was always in her society, because he was domesticated under the same roof with her, and saw her freely and without restraint.

Fitzhaven was a frank, genial young Scotchman, who was spending the summer at Sorento with his guardian. He certainly found the society charming at Sans Souci, if one could judge by the frequency with which his little boat, with its gay striped awning and blue-shirted sailors rowed into the *marina*.

And the ladies all liked him, he was so gay and amusing, and his boat was so comfortable for their evenings on the bay. Guido and he were fast friends, and, strange to say, if he loved Florence, — and Florence *was* evidently the attraction to Fitzhaven, — Guido was not a bit jealous of him.

Nearly three months had passed since they came to Sans Souci, and they were now in the middle of July; yet none of them could realize how so much time had gone except Mrs. Tremaine, who often stood looking toward Rome, and longing for wings that she might fly back to the old palace under the Pincio, and sit for an hour in the presence of one she still worshipped. Outwardly she seemed happy, though Mr. Carnegie, who watched her with unwearying care, noticed a certain recklessness in her manner.

She liked to go on the sea when the wind blew and the other ladies dared not venture. When they were bathing on the beach, twice she had walked out beyond her depth, and would have been drowned if Guido, who was a capital swimmer, had not saved her. Then she would persist in going perilously near the edge of steep precipices, and, looking into the placid water far below, she would say, with a strange smile on her face, and a longing look in her eyes, "How peaceful all is down there! It would not be so very terrible to be rocked to sleep on those blue waves." Then Mr. Carnegie would put his arm around her, and draw her away forcibly, saying sternly and severely,

while his face grew white with some hidden emotion, "Why will you expose yourself to such danger?"

"Nothing seems danger here," she would reply, "the sea is so calm and lovely; but it is like the face of humanity, one does not know what is concealed beneath."

She always preferred Mr. Carnegie's society to any other; she clung to him like a spoiled, ailing child, and he was intensely happy to be the slave of every whim.

"What an enigma Mrs. Tremaine is!" said Madame Landel to Lady Dinsmore. "She seems as much in love now with Mr. Carnegie as she did last winter with the Prince. I sometimes think she has no heart."

But Lady Dinsmore, who saw further than Madame Landel into Helen Tremaine's character, sighed as she said, "Poor girl! I fear she is not happy. Yet I think she will marry Mr. Carnegie in time."

That same evening Mr. Carnegie and Helen walked slowly back and forth alone on the *loggia*, the others having gone for a moonlight row in Fitzhaven's boat. She suddenly broke the silence by looking up in his face and saying, "Mr. Carnegie, you remember a year ago in Paris you asked me to be your wife; I refused you then, but if you still love me, and wish it, I will marry you."

"O Helen!" he exclaimed joyfully, "do you mean it?"

"Wait," she said, interrupting him, "wait until you have heard all I have to say. I do not mean that I would wish to marry you just yet, not for a year or two perhaps, but I should like to be engaged to you publicly before we go back to Rome. Don't be surprised that I speak to you in this strange manner. You remember that day when we were talking on the balcony in Rome? I told you a storm was about to burst upon me, and when it came I should fly to you for protection. The storm has broken over my head, and I need the shelter of your name, your love. But I must not, I cannot deceive you. I love another, and I have seen nothing beyond that passion for a long time. I hope I shall conquer it at last, and come to love you, not as I love this other, but enough to make you a good wife, and to be very happy with you. Can you be contented with that affection? Indeed, it is all I shall ever have to give." She looked in his face with wistful eyes and quivering lips, waiting for his reply.

There was a terrible struggle going on in the heart of the man; his face was ashy pale, and his brow contracted. What she had said seemed to wring his soul. At length the words burst from him as though compelled by a power superior to his own strength and judgment.

"Helen, I love you so madly, so entirely, that though it breaks my heart to hear you say you cannot love me as you love this other man, yet I will be satisfied with what you have to offer me. I would rather have your friendship than any other woman's love. If my deepest devotion and tenderness can lighten your burden, come to my heart and arms, as a weary, suffering child to a mother. I will be to you only what you wish, as I told you long ago. If my name and position can be any protection to you, they are yours, with my heart and life!"

She nestled close to him, like a wounded bird that had at last dropped down into the shelter of its nest, and said, as she pressed his hand to her lips, "Dear, true heart, I will try to be worthy of your love." Just then a cloud passed over the moon, and Mr. Carnegie could not see the ghastly pallor of the face that nestled against his shoulder, for a dark shadow had fallen over both.

The next morning they announced their engagement. Lady Dinsmore sighed as she said she hoped they would be very happy, but for some reason none of the congratulations seemed cheerful.

No spot was ever more appropriately named than this villa; it was indeed *sans souci*, for the days seemed to fly off without a care. It was almost impossible to be very unhappy in this lovely retreat, surrounded by the most beautiful scenes in nature. The bluest sea, the bluest sky, the vine-clad hills, the purple mountains, Vesuvius stretching out his smoky hand over the lovely ruin below, Pompeii and Herculaneum revealing to the eye of day and the wondering eyes of man their long-hidden treasures of beauty and art; the fairy isles lying on the bosom of the sea, like jewels dropped from the hand of God; the white sails of the ships passing far below; the tiny boats, with their floating pennons and gay sails; the clear thrilling voice of the sailor, singing the wild sweet songs of his lovely land, — all formed an endless variety to interest the sad heart and delight the wearied eye.

Lady Dinsmore seemed to live during these days in a sort of double existence, and Constance often wondered Florence did not notice her mamma's dreamy abstraction; but the girl was young and happy, and had never been acquainted with sorrow. How could she understand its signs in another?

Far below them, on a little peak, nestled a tiny white villa. Lady Dinsmore would sit for hours on the *loggia*, her eyes fixed intently on that spot; sometimes, when she believed herself to be unnoticed, the large tears would fall slowly, and drop, one by one, on her folded hands, and almost involuntarily, while an expression of ineffable

tenderness passed over her face, she would murmur, "My darling, my darling!" There was certainly some hidden history connected with the life of this adorable woman that had influenced her whole nature, — a memory that filled her gentle heart with pity for all humanity.

One day she made a pilgrimage to this little villa alone. The house was closed, but the old gardener admitted her, wondering why this lovely lady gazed at him with such a longing expression in her eyes. As she entered, she looked back at the man, and, shaking her head, she said mournfully, "No, no, it cannot be the same; it is so long, and time changes one so." She crossed a little *salon*, with worn, faded furniture, and, entering a small bedroom with a gay-tiled floor and a strip of faded carpet before the white-curtained bed, sank on her knees, and, burying her face in the pillows, sobbed convulsively, moaning between her sobs.

"After all these years it is as fresh in my memory as though it were but yesterday. O my darling! all is unchanged, but you are no longer here. If I could see you for one moment, if I could but hear you speak in the only tones that ever thrilled my heart!"

The wind gently waved the white curtains, a trailing vine rustled and shivered in the sunlight, a bird sailing by on light wing uttered a shrill joyous song; but still the gentle woman knelt there, forgetful of the present. Her soul had wandered back, far back into the silent past. She was living over those hours that are given to us but once in a life.

The old gardener wondered why she remained so long, and looked at her almost awe-stricken as she came out, her pale face illumined with a light not of earth, and a smile of deep peace on her lips. She had held communion with the spirit of the past, and a voice of thrilling sweetness had whispered to her, "Patience, patience, my beloved! a little longer, and thou shalt come to me."

And so she went back to her child and her other life, the life she lived before the world, and none imagined, save Constance, that to her each day was a double existence, — the duality of the present and the past.

So peaceful was their retreat, so retired from the world, that they knew very little of the political struggle that was going on in the north of Italy. Parma, Modena, and Milan had arisen in a mass, driven out their princes and dukes, and united themselves under one government. The great cry of the nation was union, — union first, and after union liberty.

They read the papers that came irregularly, and afterward Guido would remain very thoughtful for some time, and then he would exclaim, "Poor, poor Italy! O, if I could do something for my suffering country!"

At that period it was dangerous for any one to express a patriotic sentiment, especially any one in the service of the Pope; and whatever desires filled his heart, he felt the time was not come to act. But sometimes he would say in confidence to Lady Dinsmore and Constance, "I feel a terrible self-reproach to remain here in idleness and luxury when my suffering country has need of my young life and strong arm; but later I will make amends. If Garibaldi needs me, I am ready. It is for the liberty of Italy I would fight. Yes, I would give my heart's blood if Italy were free."

They were spending a few days on the enchanting island of Capri, and one lovely morning three small boats containing the party started to visit the world-famed blue grotto. The entrance is so low that even in a calm sea it is necessary to lie quite flat in the bottom of the boat, to prevent coming in contact with the rocks. They all passed in safely, with much laughing and protesting on the part of the ladies at the apparent impossibility of accomodating themselves to the small space. But when they had once entered the charmed precincts, all sense of discomfort was forgotten, and simultaneous exclamations of "What a heavenly blue! Have you ever seen such a blue?" arose from every lip. "The sky that bends above Paradise, and the waters of the River of Life," said Lady Dinsmore.

"It must have been a favorite haunt of sea-nymphs, the very abode of Amphitrite," remarked Mrs. Tremaine.

"Fancy Neptune coming on his dolphin to sue for the hand of the most beautiful of all the nereids," said Mr. Carnegie.

"What an ungainly figure the old fellow must have made, entering by that low door!" laughed Fitzhaven.

"O," said Florence, seriously, "you don't think he came in as we did! What a funny sight, lying flat on the back of his dolphin, or dodging his head about, that his crown and trident might not be injured by the rocks! How do you think he entered?" turning to Guido, who usually settled all disputed matters.

"I will tell you all about it," replied Guido. "Do you see that rock in the form of a great chair? Well, in those irreclaimable days that was a throne, covered with coral and precious stones. The lovely Amphitrite sat there in her gauzy robes, her golden locks dripping with diamonds of the sea, pearls on her neck and bosom, and crystal sandals on her little feet. She heard afar off the horn of her lover, as he approached, all the monsters of the deep following in his train. With one touch of his trident the

rocks flew open like magic doors, and he entered into the presence of his beloved with the dignity befitting a god."

"How do you know all this, Guido? I am sure mythology does not tell us so," said Florence.

"No," he replied, laughing, "the birds of the air and the fishes of the sea have told me. The serpents have licked my ears as they did those of Melampus, and I understand the language of dumb nature." Putting his hand into the water, he drew from the rock a crab, and, holding it to his ear, he said seriously, "It has spoken to me, and told me this grotto is still visited by nymphs and angels." He stood up in the boat as he spoke, and Florence, in return for his compliment, dipped her white hand into the water and flung some in his face. Starting back to evade it, he lost his balance, and before a helping hand could be stretched out he fell heavily backward, his head striking a projecting rock as he went down. Constance caught a glimpse of his white face, white as carved marble, as he sank in the blue depths, and a piercing cry escaped from her livid lips, — a cry of such anguish that it revealed her secret to all, — "O my God, he is dead!"

"No, no," said Mr. Carnegie, "he is only stunned by the force of the blow."

Two sailors had already gone down, and in a moment they appeared, supporting him between them. With some effort they laid him in the boat, his head on Constance's lap; his eyes were closed, and indeed he did look as though life had left him.

"His heart beats," said Mr. Carnegie, leaning forward and unfastening his waistcoat.

Constance sat as pale and still as he, his cold hand clasped in hers, and her eyes devouring his face.

"Oh!" said Florence, bursting into tears, "it was my fault; if I had not thrown the water, he would not have fallen!"

"Hush, darling," said Lady Dinsmore, with lips so white and trembling they could scarcely frame the words; "let us hope it is nothing serious, he will be better in a moment."

While she spoke, Guido opened his eyes and looked around rather confused; then putting his hand to his head, they noticed his hair was wet with blood. Constance gave a little cry of horror, and pressed her handkerchief to it.

"It is nothing," said Madame Landel, parting his hair, — "nothing but a scratch."

Guido did not speak; he lay pale and silent, looking into the face bending above him. There was no longer any disguise, a moment of danger had revealed what they both had tried to conceal.

They went out of the grotto more quietly than they had entered, their spirits subdued by the little adventure. Guido tried to insist on walking from the boat to the hotel, but Lady Dinsmore would not move until she had seen him placed in a chair, and carried by two sailors. It was true he was very weak and very wet, and his head ached terribly, but he was, nevertheless, very happy.

The next morning he was as well and gay as ever, so after breakfast the younger members of the party climbed to the top of a ruined fortress. There, in a little hut built of loose stones, blocks of marble, and broken capitals, they found an old man, so old and withered that he too seemed a fragment of the remains of the past. On the summit of the hill was a rustic Campo Santo, and within the crumbling fortress a few graves, overgrown with brambles and deadly nightshade. The old man hobbled after them, gazing with a sort of awe into the faces of the lovely girls, who, in their pure white dresses, seemed to him like angels, who had alighted for one moment among the ruins of past grandeur.

"What a contrast," said Fitzhaven aside to Guido, — "these lovely girls and the old man, — age and youth, the past and the present, hideousness and beauty! I wish I were an artist, that I might make a sketch."

"Why are these graves apart from the others?" inquired Guido of the old man, pointing to the forlorn-looking mounds.

"Oh!" he replied, "suicides are buried here; you should know it by these," touching with his stick the nightshade.

"*Perchè?*" asked Fitzhaven, with curiosity.

"*Perchè, Signore,*" said the old man; "after our bodies are dead they return to the earth, and spring up in one form or another; look how all the rest of the graves are covered with flowers, but never a flower grows over the guilty, only brambles and poisonous weeds. Come with me, and I will show you the contrary on the grave of the innocent."

He led them to a mound under a graceful acacia. "Here," he said, "lies one who was as fair as she with the dark hair," pointing to Constance. "Ah, *Santa Madonna!* she died fifty years ago, and I have watched this spot ever since." He uncovered his head and knelt reverently, pressing some white azalias to his lips.

"*O Signor mio!* how I loved her! every one of these flowers are a part of her, and I love them. I shelter them from the wind and sun, and water them with my tears. She was too young to die, only sixteen, and so lovely. I used to think she must be like the Blessed Madonna, her smile was so sweet, and she was so holy." There was a pathos in the old man's voice, a real grief in his quivering tones, that filled their eyes with tears as they turned away.

"What strong contrasts there are in life!"

said Mrs. Tremaine. "This old man standing among the ruins, so old that he seems never to have been young, talking to us of his buried hopes, buried fifty years ago, and we, his listeners, on the verge of life, with the dawn of hope in our hearts, listen, and wonder at the endurance of love."

They stood for a moment looking out over the broad blue sea that surrounded them. The free morning breeze fanned their cheeks and nestled in their hair; it spoke of the youth and freshness of nature, the eternal renewing of all but man's desires and joys. Yes, the fresh wind and the blue sea danced and frolicked in the glad sunlight as it did more than eighteen hundred years ago, when the tyrant Cæsar looked over the lovely scene from the summit of his proud palace, that now lay in crumbling ruins, — the grave of despair, ambition, love, and hope.

They filled the old man's hand with silver, and, turning, went down the mountain, — Constance leaning on the arm of Guido, and Florence dancing before them like a sunbeam, sending back bright smiles and gay words to Fitzhaven, who followed.

Youth, beauty, and love, hand in hand, descended to the valley below, leaving the old man to watch, as he had done for fifty years, the grave of his dead love among the ruins of a long-vanished glory.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE ROMANCE OF LADY DINSMORE'S LIFE.

GUIDO had gone to Rome for a few days to sing at the feast of the Assumption, and they were all mourning over his absence. Constance did not say the days seemed long and dull without him, but she thought so every hour in the twenty-four, and Lady Dinsmore was always saying, "I wish Guido were back, I cannot tell you how I miss him."

Then Florence would say, laughing, but with affected displeasure, "I am really glad he is gone, I am so jealous of him. I am sure mamma loves him better than she does me."

"Selfish child, are you not willing I should give a little affection to this poor boy, who has neither mother nor sister?" And then, when Florence was out of hearing, she would say, "I think with all the dear girl's apparent indifference, she loves Guido, and I know he is very fond of her. If they really love each other, I shall never separate them; she shall be his wife, she has wealth enough for both."

Constance would smile quietly to herself, and think, "Dear mother, you are a little blind; cannot you see that Florence is becoming every day more interested in Fitzhaven?" But we are apt to think what we wish will be, and Lady Dinsmore loved Guido with a deep affection, and would have been happy to have called him her son.

For some weeks a sure, but almost imperceptible, change had passed over the gentle woman. None noticed it as Constance did, for no one watched her so closely, and before no other person did she throw aside the veil that hid her inmost heart. Her child, ignorant of the signs of sorrow, only thought mamma a little weak and languid, — a sort of debility that would pass away with the warm weather. But Constance knew a hidden corroding grief, in some way connected with this spot, was consuming the strength and life of her adored friend.

One evening they were all on the sea except Lady Dinsmore and Constance, who preferred remaining on one of the heights in the garden of the villa, where there was a rustic seat under some orange-trees.

The nightingales sang; the air was heavy with perfume; the sea flowed at their feet, golden with sunset, overshot with silver rays from the rising moon. The voice of a *marinaro* singing the songs of *Santa Lucia*, while he mended his nets on the shore, mingled with the clear laugh of Florence, as the gay little boat, with its merry party, pushed off toward the purple islands.

Lady Dinsmore sat by the side of Constance, her head resting on the shoulder of the girl, who lately was her inseparable companion. Both were silent. Constance was thinking of a low marble slab, above which the tall rank grass nodded and rustled in the evening air; a row of dark linden-trees, and the round yellow moon floating above the spire of Helmsford church; an old man with long white hair and weary folded hands, a voice feeble and gentle, saying tenderly, "My child!" then a younger face, with glorious dark eyes, and a smile of deep affection upturned to hers, as he lay pale and exhausted with his head in her lap, while their boat floated out from the grotto of mystic blue.

O, how happy she had been since that morning when a blessed accident had revealed to her the strength of her own love and the heart of the one she worshipped! Although no words had been exchanged between them, a thousand little acts and the language of the eyes had told her all she wished to know. She felt Guido was only waiting until his return from Rome to ask her to become his wife. Now she had resolved to put aside every barrier of pride and the world's opinion, to unite her destiny to the only man she could ever love,

her heart was lightened of a heavy burden, and she was happy. Absorbed in her own pleasant musings, she was almost unmindful of the presence of her friend until a long-drawn, weary sigh caused her to look up. Lady Dinsmore's eyes were filled with tears, and the sad mouth quivered with the effort of self-control. Gently putting her arm around her shoulder, and drawing her a little nearer, Constance said, with a voice of touching interest, "You are unhappy; will you not tell me the cause? Perhaps my sympathy may be of some comfort to you."

"Ah, my dear, I have long wished to tell you, and yet I hesitate to speak of an episode in my life that is passed and forgotten by all. For all who were actors in that drama are sleeping with the secret shut close in their still hearts, and I too thought I had buried it so deep that resurrection were impossible; but to-night it rises before me with all the force and vividness of the hour in which I said, 'I shall live no more, for life is dead within me.' Yes, my dear, I will open to you this book of the past, and we will read its pages together, and then we will close it again forever, and only you will know how I have suffered, and that my heart has bled as well as yours.

"My mother was a Vandeleur, — a cold, proud woman, entirely devoted to the world and its fashion. My father, Lord Radcliffe, was one of the most dissipated men in all England; warm-hearted and generous, but extravagant and unscrupulous to a fearful extent; loving society, his club, racing, and the hunt better than his wife or home. I was the only fruit of this ill-assorted union; my father never cared for me because he wished in my place a son; and my mother less, because she was too selfish to love anything but herself, or, perhaps, because I was the child of the man she did not love on the day of her marriage, and whom she had come to despise and hate long before my birth. What ever was the cause I know not, but, as soon as I was old enough to understand, I felt that my mother did not love me. Nay, her entire neglect showed she disliked me. In my infancy I was given to a nurse; when a little older, to a French governess of rather doubtful morals, unscrupulous, indolent, and insincere. Instead of instructing me and developing what was good in my character, she spent most of her time at her toilet, or in reading French novels of a most questionable kind. I cannot describe to you how lonely, neglected, and uncongenial my childhood was, nor how sadly demoralizing the influences that surrounded my early youth.

"When I was about sixteen, my mother, discovering that I was pretty, decided that I should be very accomplished; then commenced a system of drudgery, by which I was expected to acquire all the knowledge I should have gained during the years of neglect and indolence passed under the charge of my unfaithful governess. Dancing, music, singing, riding, and drawing masters were crowded upon me until my life became a burden and my health began to give way under this constant application. Then, as my voice promised to be wonderful, my mother concluded to take me abroad and place me under the tuition of the best master Italy could produce. I longed for a change. I was restless and unsatisfied with my life. In my heart was a constant yearning for love and companionship. No one understood me, no one sympathized with me. I had a warm, passionate nature, tenderly alive to beauty and nobility of character. I had formed my ideal of manly perfection, as all young girls do, and it was very different from my father and the friends who surrounded him. I saw that wealth and title did not bestow happiness, and I early determined, if I married, to marry a man I could respect for his talents or his nobility of nature.

"I often fancied myself in a vine-clad cottage, hidden in the bosom of a murmuring forest, where the birds sang all day and the waters leaped from rock to rock sparkling in the sunlight; where the flowers bloomed in never-fading beauty, untrodden by any foot save the wild gazelle or the timid hare; and there with my ideal lover I thought it would be sweet to dream away my life. I was so weary, even at that age, of my surroundings; the world and the fashion thereof, the pomp and splendor, the hypocrisy and wickedness, the coldness and hollowness of every tender relation of life, disgusted and disenchanted me; and then I longed for something good and true, something pure and calm, far from the excitement and fever of the world.

"I was scarcely seventeen when, after spending the winter in Florence, we went to the baths of Lucca for the summer; there I was placed under the charge of a talented young master, a Roman, who was spending the summer in that lovely resort. I need not tell you how noble, handsome, and fascinating he was. Guido is strangely like him, and stranger still, he bears the same name, — Guido Bernardo. Now you can understand my interest in him, and my ill-concealed agitation the first time I heard his voice, and the first time my eyes fell upon him. It seemed as though the ghost of my long-buried love arose and stood before me.

"Scarcely had we met when we loved each other. I was young and lovely, he was young, handsome, and talented; and such a noble, gentle nature has never since crossed my path until I met Guido, this youth who so strangely reminds me of my lost darling. O Constance, I wish I could describe to

you the blissful hours I passed in his society. I was passionately fond of music, and his voice filled every pulse of my being. When he sang, I worshipped him. I have heard no music since but that voice, it has filled every chamber of my life. I hear it always, above the day's discordant sounds; at midnight, when all is silent; in the morning, mingled with the shrill songs of birds and the murmuring of the breeze, with the laugh of my child, the voice of my friends, — in every place, in every hour; and the roar and din of life marreth not its melody. I shall hear it again when, some blessed morning, the golden gates shall open to admit me into the eternal city; among the angels who sing before the throne I shall know him by his voice. God had need of him to complete his heavenly choir, and so he took him, leaving me to long forever for the time when I shall hear him sing again.

"The summer passed away in blissful happiness to both. I saw him often, for there was little restraint on my life. I was left entirely to my governess, and she was much too idle to watch me; and my mother, too proud and cold herself to love any one, much less a person beneath her in social position, never dreamed her daughter could commit such a folly, or that there could be any danger in exposing her to the society of a young man, of whom older and wiser hearts had owned the superior attractions. I saw him flattered and welcomed everywhere, and it was said a Russian princess was dying of love for him. I cared nothing for the difference in our social position. I only knew I loved him, and I determined from the first that nothing should separate us.

"In the autumn, after spending a month in Venice with a large fashionable party of which he was the greatest attraction, we went to Rome for the winter, that I still might have the benefit of his instruction. Our delightful meetings were somewhat interrupted, and I only saw him during the hours of my lessons, or when I met him in society. Perhaps my mother began to suspect that in public he was too often at my side, for her manner changed toward him; she was colder and less cordial, and my governess was ordered always to remain in the room during my lessons. Sometimes, when my mother had gone out on her round of fashionable calls, I would enjoy a few blissful moments alone with him while the French woman lounged in her room and read her romances. On one of these rare and too happy occasions, when we believed we were safe from intrusion, we forgot to sing, as we often did, and fell into an absorbing conversation, of which protestations of eternal love formed the topic. Like Paulo and Francesca da Rimini, we read no more that day, but I, standing by Guido, with my cheek resting on his dark hair, and encircled by his arm, listened with trembling joy to that old, old story that will never end while the stars of the morning sing together.

"The door opened suddenly, and my mother, pale with rage, stood before us; her white lips uttered no words, but her eyes burned with a terrible fury that seemed to scorch and wither me. Taking me by the arm with so strong a grasp that her delicate fingers left purple marks on my flesh, she led me to my room, and, closing the door upon me, turned the key and left me alone, a prey to the deepest anguish. Then she returned to Guido, who, as soon as she entered his presence, calmly and simply told her the story of our love, and implored her to sanction our union. She listened to him in haughty silence, and when he had finished, she rang for the servant to open the door, and, without a word, turned and left him.

"For a few days I was kept a close prisoner in my room, seeing no one but my mother's maid, a hard cruel woman, from whom I learned that my governess had been sent away immediately, and she for the present was to wait upon me.

"I sent many messages to my mother, asking for an interview, that by my entreaties I might soften her heart if she were capable of compassion; but she refused to see me. I felt keenly my separation from Guido, even for a few days, but I resolved it should not be long. After a week of imprisonment I was allowed the freedom of the house. One day, as I was passing through the corridor alone, a young Italian servant, who was very fond of me, approached, with her finger on her lip, and, drawing from her bosom a letter, smilingly placed it in my hand and passed on. I flew to my room and tore it open. As I expected, it was from Guido. I covered it with tears and kisses before I read it, and then I devoured every word. It was clear, concise, and truthful. He said he was suffering deeply from the separation, as he knew I must be; that life without me was but an intolerable burden, and that it was useless ever to hope for the sanction of my mother to our union. Was I willing to renounce wealth and position, to be his wife at once? If so, he had made all necessary arrangements, as he felt there was no time to lose in putting his plans into effect. The next evening, if I could escape from the house unobserved at seven o'clock, I should find a woman waiting at the corner of the first *vicolo*, near our house, who would conduct me to a carriage a little farther off. The coachman had received instructions to drive

as quickly as possible to a little chapel in an obscure street, where he would await me with a priest to perform the ceremony; we should then leave immediately for Naples. He added that I need not wait to take my wardrobe with me, but the servant who brought the letter would arrange to put a few necessary articles into the carriage. I did not for one moment hesitate in accepting his offer. During the day I found an opportunity of filling a travelling-bag with some clothing, jewelry, and toilet articles, which the girl carried from my room in a bundle of soiled linen.

"A few moments before seven, while my dragon was dressing my mother's hair for a dinner-party, I stole out of my room, in a gray travelling-dress, with a thick veil over my face, through the corridor, by my mother's door, — that mother whom I never saw again, and who never forgave her only child, — down the long stone stairs out into the twilight, where I found the woman waiting for me. An hour afterward I lay on my husband's breast, sobbing with joy, while two swift horses bore us away from Rome as rapidly as possible. Immediately after reaching Naples we were married again by a Protestant clergyman, and Guido's first act was to send a copy of the certificate to my mother, to which we received no reply."

CHAPTER XXXV.

HOW IT ENDED.

"NO attempt was made to molest us, and after spending a few weeks in Naples, we selected for our home yonder little white villa on the point below. There I passed the first days of my blissful married life, — days that, when I look back on them, seem like a dream of paradise. Guido had received an order to write an opera for the principal theatre of Bologna, and after the first months of delightful idleness he began to work in earnest. All his mornings were passed in writing, while I sat by his side fabricating dainty little pieces of embroidery; for a blessed truth had dawned upon me, another link would one day unite us more closely in our passionate idolatry. After his day's labor was finished, our afternoons were spent in blissful nothingness; he read a little, while I lay in his arms, my cheek resting on his bosom, listening to some sweet Italian poem, which seemed sweeter from his lips. But the book was often laid aside, while he pressed me to his heart, and looked into my eyes with a love that never for one moment wearied or changed. Sometimes, in the warm days, he would fall asleep with his head on my lap, while I gently fanned him, and smoothed back the dark waves of hair from his white forehead. He never opened his eyes upon me but with a smile; and I never in all those days saw a shadow for one moment cross his face. How happy we were all through the days of summer!

"When the sun began to decline we lived upon the sea; floating with our single rower from island to island, from purple peak to more remote headland, gliding along under the rocky walls over the *lapis lazuli* sea, listening to the drowsy murmur of the waves as they lapped the shore, or the far-off song of the boatmen. Sometimes Guido sang to me whil my head rested on his bosom, but oftener we sat in silent rapture looking into each other's faces. O my darling, my darling! But the evening came when we floated for the last time on the tranquil sea. I remember it as though it were but yesterday. It was nearly sunset, and we stood on the little *loggia* overlooking the sea; as he folded a light shawl around me, he raised my face for his usual caress, — a kiss on my forehead, both eyes, and my lips, which he called the sign of the cross. 'Now,' he said, 'darling, after to-day you will walk no more down these long steps to the shore, it is too fatiguing for you; the boatmen must carry you in a chair.' I only laughed, assuring him I was as strong and well as ever, and not tired at all. 'You are a delicate little thing, and must be cared for,' he replied, almost carrying me down the steps and putting me into the boat; then, arranging the cushion so that I might half recline, he sat at my feet and laid his head in my lap.

"The boatman pushed off, and we glided out silently from the shore. After a few moments' thought, Guido looked up and said, 'Darling, do you know this is the 20th, and we have been married nine months?' 'No,' I replied, '*Angelo mio*,' — that was my pet name for him, — 'I should have said it was but one month, the time has passed so swiftly.' 'There is only one thought that ever saddens me,' he said, 'and that is because our life at the longest will be all too short for our happiness.' I laid my hand on his lips, and my eyes filled with tears. 'Poor little darling!' he said, wiping them away, 'we will not speak of that any more. Do you know to-day I have finished the third act of my opera? another month, and then it will be done, and after that I shall take a long rest'; then he pinched my fingers, that lay in his, and whispered something that brought the hot blood to my cheek. Another month, yes, another month. Again we fell into silence. I was thinking of tender little baby-fingers touching my neck and bosom, of a little cooing voice, and soft dark eyes looking into mine with the same ex-

pression of my husband. Suddenly I glanced down at the face in my lap, and to my surprise he was sleeping, — sleeping rather heavily, I thought, and with a hot flush on his cheek. 'Poor dear,' I said softly, while I laid a shawl over him, 'he is so tired.' I pressed his hand to my cheek; 'how strange! it is burning like one with fever, but then the day has been so warm.'

"The sunset faded out of the sky, and the moon rose serenely, and fell white and soft as the light from the wing of an angel on the dear sleeping face upturned to mine. How closely I watched him! The white forehead, around which clustered waves of damp dark hair; the straight, delicate eyebrows; the nose as perfect as chiselled marble; the silky dark mustache slightly shading the mouth, around which lingered the smile of love, — how perfect he was in his young lithe manhood! Endymion, as he slept on Mount Latmos, never was more beautiful, and Diana never gazed at the youth more worshipfully than I, as I bent in silence and rapture over my cherished idol.

"I wondered why he slept so heavily, and why the fresh evening air did not cool his hot cheek and burning hands; but still I forbore to awaken him, until I could endure my cramped position no longer. He started up confusedly, putting his hand to his head. 'My darling,' he said, with real sorrow in his voice, 'why have you allowed me to sleep so long? You have fatigued yourself holding my head, and you have covered me with your shawl. I fear you have taken cold.' I assured him I was neither tired nor chilly, but expressed my anxiety about his hot hands and flushed face.

"'I think I am not quite well,' he replied, 'I may have a little fever'; and then he gave the boatman the order to turn toward home.

"We lingered a moment on the shore and looked out on the sea. Sudden clouds had gathered and covered the face of the moon. 'We shall have a storm before morning,' he said, as he put his arm around me and led me up the steps.

"All that night I sat by the bed of my darling, and watched him as he moaned and tossed in the heavy stupor and half-delirium of the first stages of fever. And all night long the tempest raved and roared around our little home, that had never known a shadow or a storm before. On the black wings of the wind and the tempest the darkness came that spread pall-like over all my life. With the early dawn I awoke the servant and sent for the nearest physician. The storm had passed away, the sun shone, and the birds sang, and so I thought the cloud that had gathered around me through the gloom of the night would also disperse; but it never did.

"Day after day the fever burned and consumed him. I think in all the time he did not fully recognize me, but his hand scarcely left mine, and my bosom was the pillow for his dear head. For nine days I sat always by his bed, watching with agonized anxiety every change, every movement, every pulse-beat. But, my dear child, I cannot linger over this; it tears my heart to shreds. The ninth day he died in my arms, his precious head on my bosom; for one moment he knew me and smiled in my face, — a smile of childish sweetness and peace; then, raising his weak hand upward, his eyes closed, and he breathed no more. It was night when he died, and for years after no day broke for me.

"They took me insensible from his bed, and all through the hours of darkness I slept, mercifully overcome by a weariness and exhaustion too profound to admit the realization of my bereavement. In the morning I was again by his side, looking at the beloved face over which Death had already scattered his pale lilies. The sea flowed on as free as ever, the birds sang, the morning breeze waved the drooping vines under which we had so often stood. O, how could nature rejoice after such a calamity!

"For several days I rested immobile, numb, unconscious. Then the thought dawned upon me that soon would be given into my keeping another life, a life derived from him, and that I must arouse myself from this stupor for the sake of my child, his child. During these hours of my bereavement I began to long for a woman's sympathy, — a woman of my own nation and tongue, on whose kind breast I might lean my head during the hours of suffering that were coming upon me. I knew a dear old English lady in Rome, a friend of my father's family. I thought if I could but reach her I should be safe, during my illness, under her care. Then another anxiety, which I had never known in all my life, was thrust upon me, — poverty. After my husband's burial the little he had saved by economy, and which he hoped to increase with the price received for his opera, was exhausted, and there remained little or nothing for my future expenses. This decided me to hasten at once to Rome, where there were many English residents who knew my father, and who would assist me in my hour of need.

"I reached Rome one night, a fortnight after my husband's death, ill, alone, and almost penniless. I went immediately to a little apartment my physician had written to engage, and that night my child was born. My journey had brought on a premature illness. For three weeks after I was delirious with fever, and knew nothing that passed during that time. When at last I crept back to life and consciousness, and

asked for my child, that I remembered to have looked upon but for a brief moment, I was told by the woman who nursed me that he had died seven days after his birth, and that they had buried him in the Campo Santo, where I could see his little grave when I was better.

"And that was all; in less than one year the life of my life was ended. A childless widow at eighteen, I stood on the brink of life, but behind me were long, long shadows. My husband had no family, only one sister who was a nun, and I did not even know by what name she was called, nor in what convent she lived. There was nothing to hold me to earth. If my child had lived, my little dark-eyed darling, I could have taken up again the burden of life and endured it for his sake; but he had gone to paradise with his father, and forever they were both calling me to come to them. O, how I longed for heaven, there was so much of me there! It was early in the season, Rome was empty, and my old English friend was still absent. I had sold my last article of jewelry to pay the expenses of my illness and my baby's burial; the proceeds of that were nearly gone, and in a few days I must stand face to face with actual want. Then the thought of writing to my father occurred to me. I told him of my sorrow, my loneliness, my poverty, and entreated him to send me enough money to enter a convent, that being my only desire. Some time passed away, and I was almost in despair of receiving a reply, when one evening as I sat in my miserable little room alone, dreaming, as I always did, of my lost happiness, some one knocked at my door. A moment after I was folded in my father's arms, and we were weeping together. Then, for the first time in my life, I felt I had a father.

"Immediately after receiving my letter, which he said nearly broke his heart, he left England to bring me home. After visiting my child's grave, and placing a little marble cross over it, I left the spot indifferent to everything; my heart was buried in the grave of my Guido, and all the world was the same to me.

"When we reached Radcliffe Castle my mother sternly refused to see me, or to receive me into the same house with herself. Lord Radcliffe and your father were college friends, and through the interest of my mother he had just been appointed to the living of Helmsford. There my father took me after our arrival in England.

"My sad history touched the heart of your angelic mother, to whom I at once clung with a sisterly affection. It was that dear and gentle friend who helped me to reunite again the broken threads of my life, and taught me new duties and new interests. You can now understand my friendship for your father and my affection for you. For four years I lived at Helmsford Rectory, when the sudden death of my mother, who never forgave me, enabled me to return to my childhood's home. My father, who was always after my trouble most kind and gentle to me, installed me mistress of Radcliffe Castle, where I lived quietly and tranquilly until Lord Dinsmore asked my hand in marriage. He was a good, noble man, many years older than myself. He knew the history of my love, and had wept with me over its sad ending; he also knew I could not love him as I had loved my Guido, but he was content with my friendship and wifely duty. We were quietly happy together; and when Florence was born something of the olden joy awoke in my heart. For often when I closed my eyes I would fancy it was the little dark-eyed darling that had nestled in my bosom for a moment, the child of my Guido."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

I HAVE LOVED YOU FROM THE FIRST.

WHEN Lady Dinsmore had finished, Constance, who was quietly weeping, gently pressed the hand that lay in hers, and said in a voice of the deepest sympathy, "I knew you had suffered; one who has pined under a malady knows well the signs of the same disease in another. I wish I could do something to soothe and alleviate your sorrow; however, sometimes the recital of our suffering lightens a little its weight."

"Yes, I have often wished to speak to you of those days, since I have been here in this spot, looking at the same scenes and hearing every hour the name that death has made sacred to me. I am glad I have told you. I have rolled away the stone and let the stagnant waters flow free; who knows but in their course they will refresh and cool the burning soil of my heart? Sometimes, as I stand here and look on the same bay where our little boat floated more than twenty-five years ago, on the same golden sunlights, the same silver moonlights flooding the waves, the same groves of olive and orange, and the same yellow vineyards, I think nothing but myself has changed; for the girls, as they gather their figs, chant the old, monotonous song, and the fisherman plies his oar and sings afar off.

'And the stately ships go on to their haven under the hill,
But O for the touch of a vanished hand, and the sound of a voice that is still!'

Through all these years I have thought of him, never, never forgetting him. And he knows how I have tried to do my duty, and

be patient until I could go to him. If there is anything in my nature strong and noble, tender and charitable, it is the memory of him that has taught me to be so. For years I looked into every face with a profound pity, thinking that under the disguise each one wore must be hidden an aching heart, that every one bore about with him the burden of a recent sorrow. But at last I learned to discriminate between real and affected suffering; I learned to be gentle with the nature disappointment had imbittered, or inconstancy and deception hardened, always remembering that few have had the example of such a perfect character, and the softening influence of such a love, made holy by death and sorrow."

She arose as she spoke, and, raising her eyes upward, she said, "To-night the stars are shining in the heavens that must be his blessed home, and I am waiting here on earth, contented to see each sun set and each moon rise, because I know that each brings me one day nearer to him. Now, my dear child, forgive me if I have saddened you; I will go to my room; I need to be alone. I hope they will not remain too late on the bay, for the evening air is chilly."

They walked up the garden path between the rows of shining ilex, the cricket chirped in the fragrant acacia, the perfume of the orange-blossom fell faint on the air, and the moon flooded the hills with sweet, pensive light. All was silence around them, as Constance kissed Lady Dinsmore, and bade her good night.

"I hope she will live over her past joy in her dreams," she thought, as she leaned above the balcony, and looked out on the bay toward the sapphire isles, where the little boat floated, a speck on the silvery sea.

A hurried step on the walk below made her start and turn, and in a moment Guido was at her side. Whether it was the surprise and joy of seeing him at that moment or because the history of Lady Dinsmore's love had softened her heart she never knew, but before she was aware of it she was in his arms, pressed close to his heart, and sobbing with her cheek resting against his.

"Be calm, my darling," he said, softly smoothing her hair, — "be calm, and listen to me, for I have much to say."

She raised her happy eyes to his, and sighed, "O Guido, I am so glad to see you! I feared all sorts of danger for you."

He took her face between both his hands, and, turning her head so that the moonlight fell full upon brow and lips, he said, "Constance, do you love me?"

The white lids drooped for a moment as she replied, "Yes, Guido, I love you; have you not known it from the first? I have loved you from the first."

"Thank God," he said, pressing her hands to his lips, "thank God that you *have* loved me; but is your love strong enough to bear the test to which I shall put it?"

"Yes," she replied, firmly, "it is strong enough to bear any test. Nothing can change it now."

He smiled fondly, still his face was very sad and serious. "Let me begin from the first day I saw you. I loved you then, as I love you now, with the first, the only love of my life, and I knew I should always love you. A great barrier separated us, and prevented my telling you of my love. I firmly resolved to hide my secret in my heart and never confess it, when the expression of your face as you bent over me that day in the grotto revealed to me the strength of your affection. Then I determined to speak. I deferred it until my return, as I wished to make one more effort in Rome to discover a secret, and remove if possible one obstruction to our union. But I have failed, as I always have, and now, my darling, I cannot keep silent, my passion is too strong for me; but the barrier still exists, — a barrier so high I fear your love cannot level it."

He bowed his head, a hot flush burned on his cheek, and his eyes filled with tears. "It is not alone the barrier of poverty, it is the barrier of shame. Constance, I am a foundling of Santo Spirito, and I fear a child of sin. My birth, my parentage, is a mystery which God alone can reveal. I had hoped it might have been poverty alone that abandoned me, but I have reason to know it was not poverty; what could it have been but the desire to conceal disgrace? I have told you all. I have told you the worst. Can you love one so unworthy?"

"Guido," she replied, looking in his face with eyes that revealed all her love, "I knew it, I knew it long ago." Then she told him of the conversation she had overheard in the Sala di Dante, and her decision at that time; "but now," she said, "all is changed, I find my love stronger than my pride. Believe me, you would be no dearer to me if you were the son of a king. I love you for yourself, yourself alone. I am the mistress of my own acts, my own future. Why should I sacrifice my happiness for the base and sordid opinion of the world? Is a diamond the less a diamond because it is imbosomed in meaner soil? Is the ivy less green because it grows from ruin and rubbish? No, Guido, no; you are Nature's child, but God has dowered you with a greater inheritance than name or wealth. He has given you genius, and the true nobility of nature; you are his child, and I am proud of you."

He clasped her in his arms, calling her by every endearing name, mingled with fervent

thanksgiving. It was a moment of rapture for both. At last they had found what they had so nearly missed. And each, looking in the face of the other, wondered how they had kept silent so long, when their hearts had been united from the first hour of their meeting.

As they paced slowly back and forth under the light of moon and stars, with clasped hands and eyes brimming with love, the night seemed filled with a new peace and beauty. All was serene around, above, beneath, and from the happy heart of each went up through the still air toward the angel sentinels on the battlements of paradise the watchword of peace.

Lady Dinsmore lay on her sofa in a white dressing-gown; the door was open on the *loggia*, and the only light in the room was the moonlight. She heard the clear voice of Florence, as she came up the steps, mingled with the deeper tones of Fitzhaven. "Lately they are always together," she thought. "It is strange, but I did hope she would have loved Guido. I should have been very happy to have seen her his wife. However, it is evidently not to be. Fitzhaven is in every way, as far as the world sees, the more suitable husband for her. Yet cannot tell why, but I would rather she had loved Guido."

At that moment a slight, white-robed figure slipped into the room, dropping her hat and shawl as she came. Her mother held out her arms, and the girl flew to her, laughing and almost sobbing in the same breath.

"Dear, dear mamma, have I done wrong? but I am so happy. Fitzhaven has told me he loves me, and has asked me to be his wife, and, mamma dear, I have promised; have I done wrong to promise without consulting you; but it was so unexpected, and I like him so much, I could not wait until I had asked you if it was best; have I done wrong, mamma?"

Lady Dinsmore looked earnestly into her daughter's face. "Are you sure, my darling, you love Fitzhaven? If you are sure you love him, it is right, and will meet with my full approval."

"O mamma, you must know I love him; I thought you had known it all summer, although I have tried so hard to hide it that I have often made the poor dear fellow unhappy. Yes, I am sure I love him better than any other person on earth except you." Dear little hypocrite, she knew she loved him better than her mother! "He will speak to you, mamma, in the morning, and you must not scold him because he has told me first; he did not intend it, but — but —"

"never mind, darling," and Lady Dinsmore smiled "I understand it all, and I will speak to Fitzhaven in the morning without scolding him. I shall be very glad to see you happy, but you must not expect to marry yet, you are both too young. Fitzhaven, according to the laws of Scotland, is not of age until he is twenty-five."

"No, mamma, I do not wish to marry yet," she replied, coloring; "only I shall be happier to know it will be some day."

"It shall be some day, so be happy, my dear; but," she added, a little musingly, "I had thought you loved Guido."

"Loved Guido? so I did, and so I do now dearly, but not as I love Fitzhaven. I love Guido as I would a brother, if I had one; but did you not know he was back, mamma? he is walking on the west *loggia* with Constance."

"Is he?" exclaimed Lady Dinsmore, joyfully, "I did not expect him before to-morrow. He did not disturb me because he thought I had retired for the night. But send him to me, dear, I wish to speak with him."

"Why are you back to-night, Guido?" inquired Lady Dinsmore, as the young man kissed her hand affectionately.

"Because," he replied, "I could not stay away another day, you have made me too happy here. I found my Roman home dull and gloomy; so I left directly after my service was finished, and hastened over the road as fast as possible, scarcely expecting the joyful reception that awaited me; but is it too late, and are you too tired to listen to me?"

"No, my dear boy," replied Lady Dinsmore, "you know my great interest in any matter that concerns you, and how glad I am to have your confidence."

Then Guido, holding his friend's hand in his, told her all the history of his life, the shame connected with his birth, the trials and sufferings of his childhood, his ambition and poverty, his love for Constance and his joy at finding it returned. "But," he said, "even now that I know she loves me, I hesitate to ask her to become my wife. I feel it is too great a sacrifice to demand of her. I am poor, and if I marry I must resign my situation in the service of the Pope, and the income I can command as a teacher will be at the most very little. What sort of a destiny is that to ask a woman to share, — one born and reared in luxury?" He spoke bitterly, and his eyes were filled with tears.

"My dear boy," said Lady Dinsmore, with real affection, "you exaggerate the evils of your position. You must leave Italy and go to England. There you will have a wider sphere for your talents. There you can gain wealth and a position. Beside, Constance is not poor. I know the noble heart of the girl so well that I do not hesitate to say she will never think a marriage with you a sacrifice. Your love will make her happy."

She arose from her reclining position, and,

resting on her elbow, looked earnestly into the face of the young man, on which was imprinted the diverse expression of anxiety and joy.

"Guido, my dear boy," she said, "it is not necessary for me to tell you how deep my interest is in you, nor how strong is my affection for you. You must have felt both. Your name, your face, your voice, all remind me of one I loved so well that since I lost him the greater part of my life has been buried in his grave. A son was born of that union. If he had lived he would have borne your name, and would have been now about your age. God took the little angel to heaven with his blessed father. I cannot tell why, but I feel that he has sent you in the place of the babe I lost, to comfort my old age. I am rich, and Florence has more money than she will ever need. Be to me a son. Let me think you the child who nestled but an hour in my bosom. Your life has been lonely and sad, you have suffered much. Forget it, and be happy. Your future is assured to you. I shall immediately settle upon you an income sufficient for every want, and after my death you will share my property equally with Florence."

"Do not speak of that," he said, with emotion; "I am young, I can work, and am rich in the love and esteem of two adorable women. I will be your son in affection; indeed, I am now. I have often fancied what a mother should be, and I would choose you from all the world as the reality of my precious ideal."

He stooped and kissed her white forehead, and, smoothing her silvery hair, he said fondly, "Good night, dearest mother! may you have happy dreams!"

And she did, for all night long in her sleep, floated with every variation of sound, like strains of far-off music, "Mother, dear mother!"

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE BATTLE OF CASTEL FIDARDO.

IT is necessary here, in order to better understand this history, to give a slight sketch of the political state of the country at that period, September 1, 1860.

Garibaldi, believing the first need of Italy was union, under the protection of Victor Emanuel, landed in Sicily, and passed through the entire south, greeted everywhere with enthusiasm by the people, who rose in a mass against the army of Francis II., and even, in many cases, the soldiers of the Bourbon deserted, and joined themselves to the great general.

After centuries of discord, division, and despotism, the Italians had at last awakened to the knowledge that the first step to liberty is union. Lombardy had just been wrenched from the power of the Austrians, and already burning hearts were longing and ready to strike a blow for the freedom of Venice, to rescue from the chains of the invader their proud queen of the Adriatic.

One by one, state after state had arisen, and declared with a unanimous voice in favor of the federation of all the provinces under the King of Sardinia, to whom they would give the title of King of Italy. All were working in the north with magnificent ardor for the reconstruction of the nation.

Garibaldi entered Calabria at the head of fifteen thousand men. There he was received with frantic ovations by the population. The morning of the 3d of September it was known in Naples that ten thousand of the Bourbon soldiers had deserted and joined his army. General Baseo arrived at the capital, and, after a long conference with the King, returned to Salerno, where he was stationed with six thousand troops, without any precise instructions; this incertitude caused confusion and disagreements. The ministry resigned for the third time, and every effort to form another was useless.

The day of the 5th it was known that Garibaldi was at Eboli, and that the Neapolitan troops had evacuated Salerno without a single engagement. The rumor circulated that the King had called General Desauget, successor to the Prince of Ischitella in the command of the National Guards, to announce to him his decision to abandon the capital. This news was received at the exchange by a rising of three points. In the evening it was known that Gaeta was the asylum selected by the King, where he hoped to take with him forty thousand soldiers. On the morning of the 6th contradictory rumors spread. It was said that he had decided to remain, and endeavor to defend himself by trying his fortune in a decisive battle on the plains of Nocera. But very soon this report was known to be untrue, for at six o'clock in the evening the King departed for Gaeta, with all the foreign ambassadors, and no demonstration was made.

He passed the night on board the royal yacht in the naval port. In the morning he tried to persuade the fleet to accompany him, but they refused, and the royal yacht left alone.

Six hours only passed between the departure of the King and the arrival of Garibaldi. The Dictator entered Naples half an hour after noon by the railroad, without any escort, — five or six officers alone accompanying him. He descended from his carriage at the Piazza Castello Reale, and took lodgings in the apartments designed for royal guests. Called by the population, who were frantic to see him, he appeared

on the balcony and said a few words, in which he announced to them that the term of their slavery was finished.

The tricolored flag was unfurled from all the forts of the city amid the firing of cannon. The balconies were draped with tricolored banners and filled with gay faces. The streets were crowded with the citizens, shouting "*Viva Garibaldi!*" and in the evening the city was illuminated, and demonstrations of rejoicing were everywhere visible. The night passed with cries and songs of joy, but in the morning all was tranquil; the laborers returned to their labor, and the merchant to his merchandise, while Garibaldi appointed his new ministry.

He assumed the title of Dictator of the two Sicilies, under the King Victor Emanuel, annexing the Neapolitan army and navy to the Piedmontese. Libario Romano, Minister of the Interior, signed the decree of the Dictator.

Toward the evening of the 9th he went, in company with two or three friends, to the Castel St. Elmo, where some few of the officers, more faithful to the cause of Francis II., had arrested several soldiers suspected of a desire to give the *castello* to the nation. At the sight of Garibaldi the soldiers immediately abandoned the fort, refusing to protect it any longer; he then called the National Guards, who occupied it at once.

That same day he issued the following proclamation:—

TO THE NEAPOLITAN ARMY!

If you do not disdain Garibaldi for a companion-in-arms, he desires nothing better than to fight at your side against the enemy of your country. A truce then to discords, the everlasting evils of our nation. Let Italy, treading on the fragments of her chains, point out to us in the north the path of honor toward the last refuge of her tyrants.

I can promise you nothing but fighting.

GARIBALDI.

NAPLES, September 9, 1860.

All these events had transpired with such rapidity and so silently that the residents at Sans Souci knew nothing of the occupation of Naples by Garibaldi until they were informed by one of the servants, who had been told by the sailors of the market-boat that stopped at the little *marina* twice a week.

Meanwhile, another scene of the great drama was about developing itself in the Pontifical states. From various cities deputations came to Victor Emanuel, soliciting protection against the foreign soldiers of the Pope, for an interior agitation was manifested just in those cities where General Lamoricière had placed his troops, in order to prevent a revolution.

Already a greater part of Umbria and the Marches was in possession of the Piedmontese army. Foligno, Spoletto, Orvieto, and Perugia had just been taken with little resistance. The same disposition was shown in the Pontifical states as in the other parts of Italy.

Ancona, then the last seaport of any importance belonging to the Papal government, was the only stronghold on the Adriatic in which the Pontifical troops, who were almost surrounded by the Italians, could take refuge.

The Musone, a small river which enters the sea a mile and a half below Loreto, flows through a valley about five hundred yards wide, dotted with a few trees and intersected with ditches for irrigation. A mile from Loreto, this stream receives from the left the Aspio, a river of more importance. These two currents and a chain of hills, on which is situated Castel Fidardo, form an angular plain, on which was fought the short, bloody, and decisive battle that wrested Ancona and the neighboring cities from the power of the Pope.

Going from Ancona, one follows the Musone, crossed by a light wooden bridge, a mile from the city. Nearly opposite, on the Aspio, is another, better constructed, of stone. A mile farther, the Valetto crosses the Musone,—a very deep and rapid river, it presents a formidable obstacle for the passage of infantry, and utterly impracticable for cavalry and guns. At this point a Piedmontese regiment of infantry, after having cut away the bridge, stationed two pieces of cannon, which on the evening of the 15th had driven back the scout of General Lamoricière, who, finding himself cut off from crossing the river, awaited the attack at Loreto with four or five thousand men, while Cialdini, General of the Italian army, had posted two divisions of six thousand men each,—one at Ancona, the other at Castel Fidardo.

On the morning of the 18th, Lamoricière, believing he could force his way to Ancona, where he hoped to receive some reinforcements and provisions by sea, attacked the extreme position of the troops of Cialdini stationed at Castel Fidardo, who, after a short but bloody engagement, drove the Pontifical army into the plains below. There, reinforced by the first line of General Pimodan, who arrived shortly after the struggle commenced, they did not despair of driving the Italians back, or, at the worst, of being able to retreat to Ancona after they found it impossible to fall back on Loreto.

At this crisis the artillery, which had not been able to leave the road on account of the high embankments, were taken with a panic of fear, some of the leaders cutting the harnesses of the horses and abandoning their guns. This confusion threw Lamoricière into the greatest perplexity. However,

he endeavored to reunite his troops, while General Pimodan covered them from the fire of the enemy. For some time they fought bravely, remaining under a merciless fire of the Piedmontese, until General Pimodan, struck by two balls, fell, mortally wounded, by the side of Lamoricière, who, shaking hands with him for the last time, and exchanging a few sad words, saw him carried to the rear. Now the fate of the day rested on a battalion of *bersaglieri*, a few companies of Zouaves and Swiss, who resolutely forced their way to the Musone, where they found themselves face to face with the guns of the Piedmontese. Then the greater part threw away their arms and baggage, and fled in the wildest confusion, taking refuge among the tall canes that grew on the bank of the river, and some even plunging into the rapid stream, that soon carried them, stiff and stark, out to the sea. The few that remained, seeing the day was lost, fought with a desperate fury, retreating toward the sea, where they were met by the troops of Cialdini, stationed at Ancona.

The foreign soldiers of the Pope, finding themselves surrounded and cut off from retreat on every side, before surrendering, fought with a frenzy of madness, face to face with the Italians. And it is even said that the wounded and dying hirelings struck their daggers into the hearts of the soldiers who came to their assistance. Lamoricière escaped from the enemy by taking refuge in the convent of Loreto, where he was concealed until an opportunity offered for him to fly to Rome.

The result of this battle was the fall of Ancona; six hundred Pontifical prisoners, among whom were thirty officers, many pieces of artillery, all the guns and baggage of those who fled, and the wounded, dead, and dying, were left in the hands of the Italians.

So ended the last struggle of Umbria and the Marches. Curtailed and diminished almost to the very walls of Rome, the Papal government, protected by its hirelings, still smiled in scornful security from this stronghold of the world. But patience, faith in God and in the future; eventually her chains will fall off, and a new Rome will arise from the ashes of the old, more noble, more glorious than ever in her palmiest days, and future generations shall yet point to her as the polar star of the world.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

AT LAST.—FACE TO FACE.

ALL day during the noise and roar of the battle, in the fury of the engagement, amid the rain of shot and shell, under the clashing bayonets, in the very thickest of the carnage, a tall slight man in gray was seen carrying water and wine to the exhausted, dying soldiers; treating alike Pontifical and Italian, bearing with almost superhuman strength the wounded beyond the line of fire and the tramp of horses; taking no part whatever in the action, neither encouraging by word or deed the soldiers on either side; looking alike with indifference on the conquered retreating or the triumphant advancing; never heeding the cries of despair or the shouts of victory; only sometimes, when he came face to face with a man on whose compressed lips was stamped the hellish strength of his hate as he was about to plunge his dagger into the heart of a fair-haired German, with a fearful blow he would turn the weapon aside, and disarm the murderer with a look.

The sailors and fishermen of Ancona who had volunteered, rushing into the fray like bronzed fiends, knew him, and their shouts of praise, prayers, and benedictions followed him everywhere. They called him St. Michael, the patron saint of the city; they cried, "He is watched over by our Holy Lady of Loreto; no harm can befall him, for all the blessed angels guard him." There was something in his calm, pale face and tender blue eyes that won love and reverence from all. Fearless of his own life, he rushed into the midst of the carnage, that he might rescue from the feet of the crowd and the tramp of the cavalry some poor wretch borne down by the stress of the battle.

"Who is that man in gray?" inquired a French general. "He seems to bear a charmed life; I should think him the patron saint of Ancona, protected by our Lady of Loreto; he performs wonderful feats of strength and courage. I just saw him drag a dragoon from under the horse that had fallen on him. By Jove! an action worthy Hercules!"

"They say he is an Englishman, *mon général*, and he treats all alike," replied the Zouave to whom the question was addressed; "just now I saw him tearing off the sleeves of his shirt to bind up the shattered arm of a poor Swiss who was bleeding to death."

"A splendid fellow!" muttered the officer under his grizzled mustache. "There is something familiar in his figure and air; I believe I have seen him before." A strange expression passed over his face, and, striking his spurs into his horse, as though pursued by a fiend, he plunged into the thickest of the battle.

The day wore on, and the panic increased; retreating toward the sea, the few who remained to fight were falling one by one under the merciless fire of the Piedmontese

artillery. Many who plunged into the Musone were followed by the pitiless shot; staining the water with their blood, they floated out to the broad sea, — fear, despair, and passion alike ended forever.

"No mercy! no mercy!" cried the Italian soldiers. "Our Lady of Loreto behind, and St. Michael before! the victory is ours because the Madonna watches over us from yonder shrine on the hill. We will not spare these invaders; death to the *Francesi!* death to the *Tedeschi!*" Many poor wretches sold their lives dearly, fighting with gleaming daggers and bloody hands, going into eternity with curses on their lips. And everywhere went the tall man in gray. Having thrown aside his hat in the beginning of the struggle, his hair was matted with sweat and dust, his face and hands grimy with smoke, his clothes torn and stained with blood, and yet he never flinched, never grew weary, heeded not the burning sun, or the hail of shot and ball. Many a poor Zouave blessed him with his last breath, as he died with the kind, pitying face bending over him. And a fair-haired German murmured, as the soul passed from the lacerated, bleeding body, "You are like the Christ my mother told me of when I was a child."

A battalion of Piedmontese had just launched a deadly hail of burning shot into a remnant of a Zouave regiment, who were struggling with desperate energy and fury against an Italian brigade. A howl of rage and despair burst from them, as their general, a fine stately man, struck by two balls, staggered and fell under the feet of his retreating soldiers.

In a moment a strong arm drew him beyond the line, and the man in gray stood looking horror-stricken on his ghastly face. All expression of tenderness and pity had vanished, and from his eyes gleamed a hate terrible to behold.

"At last, at last," he muttered between his clenched teeth, "at last face to face; but he is dying, he is unconscious, and I cannot wrench the secret from him. I have found him, but it is too late. O my God, let him live but to reveal to me what I so long to know, and I —" He paused; the words seemed to choke him, for he gasped as one in mortal agony. Then, suddenly falling on his knees, he bowed his head beside the dying man, and prayed vehemently. Still the hate and desire for revenge had not passed from his heart, and he looked coldly on the red stream that welled from the breast, staining the sod around him.

"I wished for his heart's blood once," he said. "Now it flows before me, but my hand has not shed it. He will escape me; in a few moments more he will be beyond the reach of my revenge. O my God, my God!" he cried, with almost frenzy, "and has it all been useless, — all these struggles with self, all these prayers, all these efforts to make some atonement? Yes, it has been in vain, for I have not conquered this deadly hate; I thought it was laid to rest forever, and I could meet him calmly. But no, no, it is not. The demon stirs within me, and rises with double strength. He is dying before me, and I would not stretch out my hand to save him. O, if I could have heard him speak! If he had told me she was innocent, I would have forgiven him, and he should have died with his head upon my breast." His face fell into his hand, and he remained again for a few moments silently imploring God for strength to gain this last victory, this victory over his own soul, when on his ear fell a voice, a faint and feeble voice, yet familiar,— a voice that spoke to his heart with the tones of other days,— "Water, water." He raised his head, and the dying man's eyes were fixed upon him with a sort of horror and fear. Struggling to his elbow, and pushing back the hair from his ghastly forehead, he gasped, "Yes, it is he. I am dying, Vandeleur, it is too late for vengeance."

"Hush, De Villiers," he said, with a voice of extreme gentleness, and a light on his face like one who had been in the presence of the Deity. "God knows that now I do not desire vengeance; a few moments ago I did, but now the hate in my heart is dead forever."

He raised the head of the dying man to his breast, and, putting a flask of wine and water to his lips, he said in a voice of agonized anxiety, "Tell me but one thing, De Villiers, tell me but one thing, and all is forgotten from this moment between us. Tell me, was she innocent?"

De Villiers raised his eyes to the face bending above him, — eyes already filled with the mysterious light of eternity, — and said, in a weak but impressive voice, "Yes, she was innocent. The letter I wrote you was as false as the fiendish heart that dictated it."

"My God, I thank thee!" And Richard Vandeleur raised his eyes upward with a look so eloquent of gratitude that the angel who registered it must have blotted out forever from the book of life the record of many of his sins.

"Let me do something to stop this blood," he cried, tearing open the coat of the dying man.

"It is useless, the wound is mortal; I have but a moment to live."

"Then tell me, I implore you, where is she? Is she living?"

"I know not, I cannot tell you; I have not seen her since she fled from me in the night and darkness."

"O, explain!" pleaded Vandeleur, in a voice of trembling eagerness.

"Raise me a little, so that the blood will not choke me, and I will try to tell you all. From the first I had conceived a violent passion for the girl; as soon as you left, I began my base attempts to win her from you. I soon saw it was useless; she was too pure and innocent to understand my hints and insinuations, and loved you too entirely to think for a moment of another. I then determined to separate you, thinking, if she believed you unworthy, she would turn to me; wrote that base letter to you, after which I told her of the false marriage. She would not believe it; I protested it was true, but she was still incredulous until I showed her a letter you had written to me, in which you referred to it, as you often did in your fits of remorse, regretting the crime you had committed. When she saw it in your own writing, she believed it. At first she seemed horror-stricken, then almost mad with rage and indignation at the deceit and wrong you had practised upon her. She implored me to take her away to some retreat where she never could see you again. I wished to leave the place, fearing you might suspect some villany and return at once before I had succeeded in my object. I agreed readily to her proposal and left the cottage, telling the servant we were going to you.

"That night we stopped at a poor inn, at a little hamlet near Ancona. Alone, with this unprotected, suffering creature entirely in my power, a demon took possession of me, and I made advances to her which she repulsed with the indignant pride and scorn of an outraged angel. In the darkness she fled from me; I pursued, but failed to find her. In the morning I continued my search, but could discover no trace of her. Thinking she had fled to you, and your vengeance would be terrible if you overtook me, I left the country. I have never seen her face since that night she looked reproach and scorn into mine."

The hot tears fell one by one on the upturned face of the dying man, and the strong fingers clasped tighter the damp cold hand that rested in his.

"I forgive you, God knows I forgive you! How she must have suffered, poor hunted, tortured creature! O, if I could but look into her face for one moment, and know she was safe, I should be willing to die in your stead, De Villiers!"

"If she is not on earth she is safe in paradise; such angels as she are not lost. But if she still lives and you ever see her, implore her to forgive me; tell her I asked it dying."

A film gathered over his eyes, large and searching, with the intense expression of those who stand on the boundary line of a new country, striving to look farther than is allowed to mortal vision; and he said in a voice sinking far down below the level of life, "How I have sinned! but of all my crimes that was the greatest. I have been punished, fearfully punished. I have lost all, friends, wealth, and love; and I am dying, with a wasted life behind, and a dark and terrible uncertainty before me. I have fought like a demon to-day, and the blood I have shed has cried for vengeance against me, and it has followed me close and sure. Ah, if I had fought for a cause I loved! but I have not. I have been but a hireling in the hands of others. Still, Vandeleur, you have forgiven me; you whom I have so wronged. In those old days I loved you; yes, believe me, I loved you as well as I could love anything. But the evil in me was stronger than the good, and I could not resist the promptings of the fiend. Ah, what a weak fool I have been! I have poured oil on the fire of my own passions. You remember how I scoffed at virtue. She taught me its strength; and now that I can die in your arms, assured of your forgiveness, convinces me that there is some divinity moulded into our base clay. Look into my face with your gentle eyes, *mon ami*, and let me see for a moment the old smile there. Do you remember those nights on the Adriatic when she sang to us, '*Non ti scordar, non ti scordar di me*'? Angels and Mother of God, have mercy on me! I see Christ far above me, extended on the cross, and though there is agony on his brow there is pity in his eyes, — pity like yours, Vandeleur. If I might but reach up through the darkness and touch his feet, I should be saved."

He raised his arms for a moment. With a long, straining gaze he looked into the blue heavens; but he saw nothing save a pitying face bending from the darkness above and around, into which his poor soul ventured timidly. Who can follow it beyond the line of vision? The horizon dips down into the sea, but we know not if beyond there may not be an island of peace for such tempest-tossed pilgrims.

He died, the memory of his sins before him, the roar and din of battle around him, and his head on the breast of the man who had once been his deadly enemy. When sin and sorrow, penitence and remorse, life and death, meet in such sharp extremes, we know not what glorious results are born of such agonized travail.

Richard Vandeleur knelt gazing into the ghastly face that bore the marks of a terrible conflict, long after the breath had left the cold lips. An ineffable peace had fallen upon him; he scarcely heard the roar and fury of the battle that still raged at a little distance. One thought filled all his soul

with joy, — she was innocent, and if she lived she loved him still; yes, in spite of the wrong he had done her, he felt she had forgiven him and loved him still.

Suddenly through the hot air came a seething, hissing emissary of death. Something pierced his lungs with a sharp pain. He threw up his hands, and fell forward senseless on the cold breast of De Villiers.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

UNDER THE LIGHT OF THE MOON.

O THE struggle of life! O the sharpness of the conflict in which we engage against the world, our fellow-creatures, and ourselves! From the cradle to the grave we find living a contest, and the earth a vast battle-field covered with the slain. We spring into being with a wail, and, face to face with Nature, we find in her an unpitying adversary. Her suns scorch us, her frosts freeze us, her winds tear us from every shelter, her seas ingulf us, her rocks are hurled upon us, her thunderbolts cleave the heavens and descend in fury to wrench from us the feeble existence she has bestowed. Men prey upon men with the ferocity of wild beasts; envy, jealousy, pride, and ambition are the motives that impel men to pursue and hunt each other with unwearying hostility; the more feeble, the more appealing for protection and support, the quicker we are borne down, trampled on, and passed over by the hurrying feet of our enemies.

Poor butterflies! we go forth and sport a little while in the sunlight of the morning; the flowers woo us, the breeze bears us on buoyant pinions, the songs of birds fill the air around us, and we rejoice in the life of life. But the storm comes, and who heeds us when our wings are soiled and torn, and we are beaten into the mire? The flowers that wooed us turn away their languid heads, the birds sing for other gay flutterers, and the breeze that bore us up to heaven on glad wings serves but to impel us downward; the myriads of toilers and strugglers who have fallen in the strife make the world one vast tomb. One generation passes away, and another arises on its ashes; and who shall know or care in the succeeding ages what hearts have suffered, beat, and bled, or how many weary heads have ached with painful thought, how many hungry souls have striven to lift the curtain that hid from them the great unknown? Not one discovery in art or science has been made but some one has fallen a victim to the truth he upheld, and has bought with his own blood the achievement of his life-long efforts. Of all the enemies that besiege us, the most difficult to vanquish is self; we stand appalled, face to face with an adversary against whom many have striven, but striven in vain. They have found the rebel heart and the stubborn brain too strong for human strength to crush; some have conquered, but more have died before the conquest. We all have struggled and suffered, and whether we overcome or are overcome, still on the battle-field of life we must not lie down on our shields to rest until the final victory is won, until the last trump of the archangel is sounded.

The moon looked down with pitying face upon the deserted battle-field of Castel Fidardo, — deserted save by the dead and dying, and the angels of mercy who went here and there binding up the wounds and holding the cup of cold water alike to the lips of friend and foe.

Everywhere went two Benedictine monks, and with them a Sister of Charity, her face pale and sweet as a sorrowing angel carved over the tomb of a saint. Eyes large and soft, from which the fires of passion seemed burnt out forever, looked from the projecting hood of serge with infinite tenderness and pity; and lips that once must have whispered words of love drooped in mournful curves, as she murmured an *Agnus Dei* over a dying soldier.

Tenderly she washes away the clotted blood from the feverish wounds; with skilful fingers she binds up the shattered limbs; the cold water she places to the parched lips seems nectar, and the cool soft hand pressed upon the dust-stained brow is like the tender touch of a cherub's wing. Everywhere she bears with her a sense of calm and refreshing, and many dim eyes are turned in blessings upon her as she passes.

Near the trenches on the ground sits a young girl with dishevelled hair and ghastly brow. Against her bosom rests the bronzed face of a young man. He has been some hours dead, but she does not know it; she thinks him sleeping from exhaustion and weakness, and she sways back and forth, and murmurs to him as a mother would to a weary child. It is poor Antonio, the fisherman of Sinigaglia, to whom Richard Vandeleur had given thirty *scudi* that he might be united to his Francesca. But a mightier than poverty has come between them now; it is death, and the bride of a few weeks does not know it, for the fear and agony of the day have benumbed and clouded her reason. And she sits there murmuring the same words of love, always ending with the question, "*Antonio mio*, why dost thou sleep so heavily?"

Sister Agnese draws near, and stands for a moment gazing on the group with eyes of intense pity. Then, softly laying her hand on the girl's head, she says, "*Francesca*

mia, why do you sit there on the damp ground? Your Antonio is very weary; he has need of rest; let these men take him to his home. And you, *povera figlia*, go yonder to the shrine of the Madonna, and pray that he may awake. Padre Hypolito," beckoning to the monk, "cannot you persuade her to leave him for a moment? He is dead and she does not know it, her reason is quite gone."

"*Figlia mia*," said the monk, putting his arm around her, and gently endeavoring to remove the dead, "come with me to the shrine of our Lady, we will pray for your Antonio."

"My Antonio!" she cried wildly, pressing him to her heart, and kissing again and again his cold lips, "why do you not awake?"

"He will awake no more," said the nun, "unless you say many paternosters to our Lady of Loreto."

"I will go then, I will go quickly, that he may open his eyes and smile on me, that I may hear his voice calling me, '*Carissima mia.*'" Gently she laid him down, folding her apron for a pillow, and crossing his already rigid hands on his breast. "*Caro bello*," she murmured, as the monk led her away toward Loreto, "I will return to you directly." Then Sister Agnese made a sign to the men to raise him and carry him away.

The moon rose higher in the heavens and floated in serene splendor above the scene of suffering and death, revealing the ghastly upturned faces, with wide-open eyes. They seemed by their fixed intensity even yet to implore pity from heaven. The river murmured and rippled and sparkled between its reed-covered banks, where the spirit of night whispered mysteriously to the double-dyed crimson *papavero*, that gently dropped its soporiferous petals on the pallid brows of the silent sleepers, who needed neither mandragora nor poppy to lull them to repose, for after the frenzy and fury of the day they slept well.

Mingled with the sad murmur of the Adriatic came at regular intervals the booming of the cannons, as the enemy bombarded the hilly fortress of Ancona, and across the transparent blue air flashed and flickered the baleful light of the returning fire. From the city above came the roar and din of the battle; for although Night had dropped her sable curtain and lulled nature to repose, yet the unquiet heart of man, filled with hellish hate, still struggled for victory with unabated fury.

Sister Agnese passed here and there over the field, wherever a dark outline or a confused heap told her some poor remnant of humanity needed aid, pity, or prayer. Suddenly she stopped, and, clasping her hand to her heart with a suffocating cry, she fell on her knees before a ghastly heap, the bleeding forms of two men, one in the uniform of a French colonel, the other in a citizen's dress of gray.

She did not see the face of the man in gray, for it was hidden on the breast of the other, but on one finger of the outstretched hands clasped above his head glittered a ring of singular device and brilliancy. With a frenzy of strength she raised the body, and, turning the face toward the light, examined the features closely.

What was there in the worn bearded face, the ghastly brow, the tangled blood-stained hair, to remind her of the fresh boyish cheek, the clear blue eyes, the brown curls of the head that had so often rested on her bosom? Scarcely a trace. Yet it was the same; she knew it with the power by which one soul recognizes another in eternity, though separated from the form and face it bore on earth.

"My God!" she said, "both here, — one lying dead on the breast of the other. Is it thus, after all these years, I meet the men who have worked out for me such a terrible destiny, who have branded my life with such a sin? *O Riccardo mio!*" she moaned, as she laid his head on her knee, and clasped her hands as one in prayer, "I had hoped that at the last thou wouldst have had time for repentance and absolution, so in paradise I could have met thee, and lived with thee forever. But thou hast died here without confession or sacrament, and now indeed thou art lost to me for eternity. How changed, how changed!" she continued, gazing at him with the pathos of pity in her eyes and voice; and as she gazed a new expression passed over her face, and a new light beamed from the depths of her mournful eyes. Clasping his head to her breast, and pressing her cheek against his, she cried: —

"*Pietà, Signore!* I thought this love was dead forever; but no, it has only slumbered, and now it stirs, awakes, and springs to life with its olden fervor. O, if he were but living before me I would forget all, even the crime that separated us, and follow him forever, until he smiled upon me! My woman's heart cries to me. My love, my life, I remember those old days of bliss. Of what use have been my prayers and fasting, the gloomy walls of my cell, the cold stone where I have slept, the scourge, the penance, and the mortification? It is all forgotten. I remember only the hours I lay on your breast, the moonlit seas where we floated, 'the still, green places where we met.' I would give up my hopes of eternal happiness in the presence of the Madonna for one hour of the olden bliss. O sinner that I am! O blasphemer! what do I say? Mother of

Christ, forgive me; thou who wast a woman, intercede for me!"

Praying and weeping, while the scalding tears fell on the dear face pressed to her heart, she fancied a faint sigh fluttered to her ear like the wing of a dying bird. With frantic haste she tore open his clothes, and, pressing her hand to his heart, she exclaimed, "He lives, he lives!"

The transformation from despair to joy was sudden, and her voice rang out clear and shrill on the air as she cried, "Padre Benedetto, send hither some men with a litter." In a moment a monk and two fishermen were at her side.

"Lift him gently," she said, with a smile of almost joy; "he still lives, and we may save him."

"Ah! it is our *Signore Inglese*," they said, as they raised him tenderly. "He has risked his life for us many times to-day; we will save him if we can."

"And this *Francese?*" inquired one, spurning the body of De Villiers with his foot. "Let the ravens eat him."

"Hush!" cried Sister Agnese, sternly. "Are ye men or brutes that ye speak so? He has injured me more than any of you, and I forgive him. Let his body be decently cared for."

Pressing one of the cold hands of Richard Vandeleur to her lips, she walked by his side while they carried him to the nearest cottage. She visited no more the battle-field that night, but after the surgeon had dressed his wound and rendered him as comfortable as possible, she knelt by his bed and prayed with passionate fervor that he might be restored to consciousness long enough to know her, if only for one moment.

As the rosy dawn stole through the little window of the hovel where he lay, it found the pale nun still kneeling by his bed. She had thrown aside her hood and mantle of serge, and torn off the white bandage that confined and concealed her hair. She wished, if he awoke, he might see her as in those olden days. With her crucifix clasped in her hands like the penitent Magdalene, she prayed that she might be forgiven because she had loved much.

Slowly, slowly the red tide of life drifted back to the white lip and cheek of the suffering man. He opened his eyes with a confused memory that Mona had been the last in his thoughts, and now his lips first murmured her name. With a cry of rapture she clasped his hands, saying, "I am here, *Riccardo mio*, I am here; your Mona is by your side. Do you not know me?"

He looked long and searchingly into her face, then a smile of recognition trembled on his lips, and, raising his weak arms, he drew her to him and pressed her closely to his heart without a word.

The golden sunlight flooded the dingy room; the birds shook the dew from their wings and floated up to heaven with jubilant songs. But these two poor souls, united at last after so many years of weary waiting, heeded not the awakening of nature, neither the shadow of a dark wing that rested upon them. Oblivious of all but that heart beat to heart, and lip was pressed to lip, they lay weeping in each other's embrace.

CHAPTER XL.

RICHARD VANDELEUR'S REPARATION.

TOWARD the last of September, one delicious morning, Constance, leaning on the arm of Guido, and talking in a light, lively strain, wandered through the winding paths of the orange-gardens at Sans Souci. They were as happy as two children, living in each other's society, surrounded by congenial friends, in the midst of a paradise of beauty, enjoying to the full the *dolce far niente*.

Guido had sent in his resignation to the chapel, which had been reluctantly accepted, and now he was free to marry. It was Lady Dinsmore's wish, that, after spending the next winter in Rome, they should all return to England together, and the wedding should take place at Dinsmore Castle. Constance was too happy in the present to desire any change; yet she sometimes asked herself, "Is this to end as my other hopes have? Am I too secure? Is there even now a dark cloud gathering in my horizon, that may break over me at any moment? No, it cannot be; I have suffered so much. I feel now it is ended, and my future will be happier than my past. He loves me; then what have I to fear?"

She rarely indulged in such thoughts, for Guido was so joyous, so contented; and his sweetness of disposition seemed infectious, it was impossible to be sad with him. This morning there was no cloud in their heaven. They were talking, in the security of a joyful present, of an undoubted, blissful future.

"I shall not be idle always, dear," Guido said. "I shall strive to become a composer that the world will not refuse to recognize. And you shall be proud of me, my darling."

"I am very proud of you now," she replied, with a shy, sweet smile; "and nothing you can do will make me love you any better."

"*Bella mia!*" he said, with a look of deep love and gratitude, "what have I done to merit such an angel?"

And, so talking, they turned a winding path and came upon Helen Tremaine sitting alone upon a garden seat, her face buried in her hands, absorbed in deep thought.

"Ah, Mrs. Tremaine!" cried Guido, "we have caught you planning some new mischief. The brightest, sweetest rose I can find for a full confession."

"Well, I will confess then," she said, starting up, and revealing for an instant a most sad and pained expression, which passed away as she spoke. "I am horridly bored in this stupid place and with this monotonous life. I am sick of your sweet society, I am surfeited with moonlight, love, and flowers. I long to get back to some city. I am pining for a drive in the Bois or on the Pincio. O my life in Egypt! O the flattery and the strife!" and, like Cleopatra, she would have added, "O my Roman Antony!" "I was born for excitement, I was not created to vegetate in rustic simplicity. I am tired of white dresses and straw hats; in fact, I would like to make a gorgeous toilet, and go to an ambassador's ball."

Poor unquiet heart! A red spot burned on her cheek, and she flung herself back in her old position with impatient weariness.

"I fear Mrs. Tremaine is not happy," said Constance, as they continued their walk.

A servant approached them. "A letter for the *Signorina*." She took it, and, before breaking the seal, said quietly, "It is from Mr. Vandeleur."

She had told Guido of that episode in her life which had cost her such pain; nevertheless his cheek flushed slightly, and a bitter pang of jealousy shot through his heart, when he saw the terrible pallor of her face as she read.

"O Guido, what shall I do?" she said, giving him the letter when she had finished. It was very short, only a few lines.

"Constance, I have found her, but I am dying. I have only a few days to live. Will you come to me? I wish to see you once more, and you may be able to comfort her when I am gone."

"What shall I do?" she said again, looking anxiously in his face.

"We will go to him directly, my darling," he replied. "Poor Mona, I loved her as a sister; I remember our childhood; now she needs me, and my place is by her side. Let us seek Lady Dinsmore, she will accompany us." That same day they left Naples for Ancona.

In one of the largest rooms of the Hotel della Pace, overlooking the Adriatic, lay Richard Vandeleur, supported by pillows, emaciated and pale; his eyes looking out from their deep hollows with a startling intensity; his whole appearance that of one on the very confines of eternity, yet over all the pale worn face was an expression of infinite calm and content. His wound, which was through his right lung, refused to heal, and frequent hemorrhage had so reduced him that nothing could possibly raise him from the weakness and exhaustion consequent. By his side sat Mona, no longer in the dress of a Sister of Charity. That morning she had told all her sad history to a kind-hearted priest, and at the earnest request of Richard Vandeleur he had performed the sacrament that made them indeed man and wife.

He was listening to her now; his hand clasped in hers, and her sad eyes fixed on him with adoring love.

"We will say nothing of the poor sinner who so deceived you," she said, with a little shudder. "He has gone to be judged by One who is most merciful. It is true, my darling, he parted us, but that should have been, — it was necessary. And though the means were wrong, perhaps the result has not been all bad. It was just that we should perform some penance to atone for our sin."

"Our sin," he repeated, sadly. "My sin, not yours, my poor child. You were innocent."

"No, no, I was not entirely innocent, for I loved you then better than the dear Madonna, and for a long time after; and even now," she said in a low voice and with a sudden flush, "I love you before the dear sisterhood who have done so much for me, and among whom I have found a shelter for all these years. *O Riccardo mio*, I will forget them. I will go with you and be your slave. It may be a sin, but I shall be happy to sit at your feet and look into your face."

His eyes filled with tears as he said solemnly, "Mona, my beloved, you must not think of any future with me. You will be spared that sin, if it be a sin. In a few days I shall be where your thoughts can follow me without disloyalty to your religion. Can you not see I am dying? My darling, I cannot remain long with you, but in a little while you will come to me."

"Do not speak of dying," she cried, with sharp anguish in her tones. "You will not die. I will pray to the Madonna day and night. I will cling to her feet and implore her to spare you. I will do any penance. I will make a pilgrimage over the rough stones with bleeding feet; I will scourge myself; I will fast, like St. Jerome; I will waste my poor body to a skeleton until the Mother of God hears and grants my prayer."

There was a fierce light in her eyes and a strange compression of her lips, as she clasped his hands to her heart with almost frenzy.

"I thought that night," she continued, "when I fled from that wicked man in the darkness, that our Lady had no pity on poor suffering women like me; but the next morning, when I found a shelter in the convent on the hill, and the good nuns were so kind and tender to me, my feelings changed, and I was all gratitude to our blessed Mother. I think, darling, we are all so much better when God is good to us; and then when my dear little baby was born the sisters stood over me, never scorning or despising me, although they had just cause to think me a sinner, for I would tell them nothing. I felt then such a love for our Lord, that, like the Magdalene, I could have washed his feet with my tears. But when the child died, a few days after, the evil spirit took possession of me, and for a long while I hated everything. The sunlight, the blue sea, the soft breeze, the fragrant flowers, all, all were hateful to me, and even the good *padre* who ordered fasting and the cold stone for my pillow. Think of it, after pillowing my head so long on thy breast! O, it was very hard then! I thought the pictured Madonna in my cell mocked me with her smile of pity. And then I turned it to the wall until the *padre* insisted upon my looking at it and praying before it. Like an angry tiger I used to rush back and forth in my narrow dark cell, striking my head against the stones, and scourging myself until the blood flowed over the knotted cord, delighting in the pain because the agony of my body relieved somewhat my mental misery. It was years before I was subdued, and then what an infinity of pain and penance and strife it cost me! But at last gentler feelings came. It was at the time of the cholera, when many were dying, and I tried to do something for my fellow-creatures, that the cure came, or perhaps I should say the partial cure, for I think I was not wholly cured until the night I held you in my arms under the light of the moon, and felt your breath on my cheek. Then all the angels of God sang in the air around me, and I loved our blessed Saviour with sufficient fervor to admit me into his presence. But now, now if he takes you away, the dark spell will come again. I feel it, I know it. Nothing can avert it. I shall die of madness!"

A lurid fire burned in her eyes, and a fierce expression passed over her face.

Mr. Vandeleur drew her gently toward him, and, pressing her cheek to his, while the hot tears fell from his eyes, said, with inexpressible tenderness, "*Sposa mia*, will not the thought of my love for you calm and soften your grief when I am gone? I understand your suffering; I too have passed through it all; but now the anguish of it is lifted from me forever. I have not been a good man; the greater part of my life has been spent in sin and self-gratification, and once I was mad with the desire for the life of the man who separated us; but for him you might have been my wife years ago, and my child would have died in its father's arms. It was a great wrong, and when he lay dying before me, for one moment I hated him, and would not stretch out my hand to save him; but soon better feelings came, and I forgave him freely and fully, and he died with his head on my breast. I have gained the last victory over self, I have found you, and you still love me; I have made my reparation, as far as it is in human power. There is but one thing more that distresses me, — but one thing, my Mona, and you can remedy that; then I shall die infinitely happy."

"What is it?" she cried, "what is it? I will give every drop of my heart's blood for you."

"I only ask," he said, folding her closer to his heart, — "I only ask that you will let the memory of my love and suffering drive from your heart every dark thought; that you will not murmur nor complain against the power that has taken me from you after this short reunion; live calmly and patiently as long as God wills it, and be assured always that even in heaven I shall be happier if I know my Mona tries on earth to do as I have wished."

"Oh!" she sobbed, "I will try; but you cannot, you must not, leave me."

Constance was not prepared for such a change in Mr. Vandeleur, and when she entered the room she was so overcome by the shock as scarcely to be able to reply to his calm greeting.

"I am so glad you have come; I feared you would not arrive in time." Holding out one hand, and placing the other on the head of Mona, while he turned his earnest eyes to Constance, he said, "This is my wife, and, Mona, this is the dear and gentle lady who first taught me my duty to you. If I have done aught of good to my fellow-men, if I have gained any conquest over self, it is to her I owe the first impulse. You will always love her, and she will be kind to you for my sake."

Mona raised her wistful eyes to the gentle face bending over her, and said, with trembling anxiety, "Do you think him so very ill? O, tell me he will not die!"

"We will hope for the best; we will pray to God together," Constance replied, as she drew a chair near the bed. "Let me watch by him to-night, while you take a little rest."

"No, no," she cried, almost fiercely; "I shall not leave him a moment; my place is here while he lives."

"Poor child!" said the sick man with a gen-

tle smile, "she has watched over me day and night, without food or sleep; but her labor of love will soon be over. Open the blinds a little, darling, that I may look on the sea. How calm and still all is, after the tumult of the battle that has raged around us!"

His eye fell on the ruined fort at the entrance of the harbor, its walls blackened and crumbled by shot and shell.

"How like the life of man!" he said. "A few days ago it stood a strong, noble structure, defying wind and wave and the ravages of time; towering in solitary grandeur above the sea that now almost breaks over its ruined walls. What nature hath spared, the hellish passions of the human heart have accomplished. It is fallen, — a wreck, a ghastly remnant of power; and I, lying here and looking upon it for the last time, with the waves of eternity almost flowing over me, feel myself to be but the wreck of my own passions and follies.

"O, how the past comes back to me! — those days of golden opportunity, of buoyant hopes, the desires and dreams of my youth unfulfilled in the long years wantonly squandered, until the disgust, the weariness, the heartache, the pain of remorse and regret, gathered upon me a burden that was once heavier than I could bear; but, thank God, it has fallen away from me forever, and I now stand on the threshold of eternity, as I once stood at the dawn of life, eager and longing to spring into the unknown. Constance, since the day you pointed out to me the weary path of duty, stripped from falsehood the flimsy disguise I had called truth, saying, with all the earnestness and fervor of youthful virtue, 'Happiness begins with self-immolation,' God knows how I have tried to prove the truth of your words, and I trust it has not all been in vain. If I have gained from the Father of infinite goodness one smile of approval, I am content that my labor is finished, — yes, content. To-day, when all is ended for me, and I am disinterested in the things of earth, I speak with the solemnity of one already on the confines of eternity. If it were given to me to return to the morning of my days, I would not retrace my steps, I would not renew again a struggle with the world that never has in any case given me the victory. It is a labor as useless as Ixion's or the daughters of Danaus. Alas, no! I am too weary; I long for the calm rest of eternity; I have tried to school my heart and bend my stubborn will to the Divine law, and I must now acknowledge a superior justice and wisdom in all this before which I am compelled to bow. In this hour mercifully all remorse and regret are taken from me, and I feel it sweet to lie in the arms of God, as a child on its mother's breast, leaving him to do whatsoever he wills."

While Mona slept for a few moments by his side, briefly and with much effort he told Constance of his future arrangements for her. "I have left her all my personal property," he said, "excepting some jewelry, pictures, and statuary at Helmsford, which I beg you to accept as a remembrance of one who, if fate had permitted, would have loved you with the only love of his life. You will be kind to this poor child after I am gone, and strive to direct her sorrow in the right channel; I fear for her; I never knew the strength of her affection until now. Ah! if I had but made her my wife before, what a noble, beautiful character she would have become, how happy I might have been, and Helmsford would not have been without a Vandeleur! But there is no one whom I would rather leave its mistress than Lady Dinsmore; she is a perfect character, and the parish will find in her a better friend than I have been." Smoothing the hair of Mona gently as she slept on his pillow, he said again, "Be kind to her, and try and soften her grief by your friendship and sympathy. Poor darling! I hope she will find some consolation in her religion."

Constance, with tearful eyes, promised all he asked. Then, with flushing and trembling, she told him of her love for Guido and of her engagement. Mr. Vandeleur pressed her hand, and said fervently, "I am thankful you have found happiness with another; I sometimes feared I had cast a shadow over your life, and robbed you of your trust in humanity."

"I did suffer very much at first," she said in a low voice; "but now I see it was all for the best, — for I never could have loved you," she faltered, "as I love Guido."

"Yes, dear, it was all for the best," he replied, with a little sadness in his smile. "We lay the axe to the root of the old tree, and a new one springs up in its place."

He said no more, but fell into a revery that seemed to be happy, because of the peace that brooded over his face.

Neither Lady Dinsmore nor Guido saw him until the next morning; then their interview was brief and sad; he recommended Mona earnestly to the love and protection of her foster-brother, saying, "I know that once your heart was filled with bitterness against me, but now the pressure of your hand tells me I am forgiven."

"Do not speak of it," said Guido, gently; "I forgot my enmity long ago; Constance taught me."

"You will be mistress of Helmsford," he said, pressing with feeble fingers the hand of Lady Dinsmore; "be kind to my poor people, kinder than I have been."

"Yes," she replied, weeping, "I will

strive to be what you would have been if God had spared you longer."

"Promise me one thing," he continued earnestly, — "promise me that the first heir born to Helmsford shall be called Richard Vandeleur. Here on my death-bed I will leave him my name, and wish for him only the good in my nature without the evil. May his life be more worthy of his inheritance than mine has been!" He paused from weakness, but after a moment he said again to Lady Dinsmore, "And also promise me to live in the old Hall half the year, and speak of me sometimes to my tenantry. O that I had done more for them, that my memory might have lived in their hearts!" and then, drawing Mona to him with a look of love and anxiety, he placed her hand in Lady Dinsmore's, saying, "Remember I loved her, and she was worthy of it."

"I will remember it," she said, folding the trembling weeper in her arms, and kissing her tenderly; "she too shall have a place in my heart with those I already love."

"Thank you," he murmured drowsily; "now all is finished, I will sleep."

A few days passed, and they all knew his hours were numbered; each one augmented his weakness, and drew to the finest fibre the thread on which his life was suspended. All united in affectionate care to render his last hours calm and peaceful. Mona scarcely quitted his pillow; tender, eager, desperate, her strength was almost superhuman; she seemed to have overcome the weakness of nature; not for worlds would she have lost for one moment the loving gaze of the dear eyes that were always fixed upon her face. One day he felt a rain of hot tears on his forehead, and, looking up, he said, "My darling, why do you weep to see me die? I do not suffer; let me lean my head on your bosom."

She raised him tenderly, not allowing any one to assist her, and, laying her tear-wet cheek on his hair, she soothed him with low whispers of love, mingled with strains of music he had heard in other days.

He fell into a light slumber, and a smile of joy passed over his face as he murmured a fragment of an old song they had sung together years ago on the moonlit Adriatic. All the intervening time of sorrow and suffering was swept away forever, and now, dying on the bosom of the woman he had loved in his early youth, his soul floated back to the calm and sweetness of those old days, and like a child that smiles in its sleep at an angel vision, he gave his hand to the great Consoler, and stepped unhesitatingly beyond the portal of life.

It was some time before they knew he had ceased to live, for Mona sat like a statue regarding the immobile face long after the spirit had passed away. She did not moan nor cry. Her tender, passionate grief seemed to have ended with his life. Like Niobe, her face bore the stony impress of a fixed anguish. With a power which none could resist, she forced them all to leave the room, performing herself the last offices necessary to the poor clay. When the limbs were composed, and the quiet hands folded over the pulseless breast, she returned to her old seat by his side. With her elbows on the bed and her hands pressed to her temples she gazed in stony silence upon the face on which the angel of death had set his seal of peace. Night and day she watched over him while Guido made the arrangements necessary for the transportation of the body to England.

On the afternoon of the second day, the funeral procession, under a military escort, followed by the population of the city, amid the tolling of bells and firing of cannon, wended its way to the shore, where a ship, with a black flag at half-mast, waited to receive the body.

The shore was lined for miles with men, women, and children, all straining their tearful eyes for a last glimpse of the ship, as she steamed swiftly out of the bay, bearing the remains of one who in a brief time, by his deeds of benevolence and kindness, had won so deep a place in the affections of a thousand poor hearts.

"*Madonna santissima* give his soul a quick journey to paradise," said a woman, holding her child up above the crowd, that he might see the last flutter of the black flag. "He gave his life for us. When shall another noble heart like his come among us?"

And so, followed by blessings and benedictions, the ship passed out of sight, lost between the sky and the sea. And more genuine and universal sorrow was felt for the death of Richard Vandeleur than for all the hundreds who had fallen in the battle.

Mona, locked alone in a room overlooking the bay, with her cold hands clenched over her forehead, a stern, set expression around her mouth, and her eyes wide and tearless, followed with intense gaze the way the ship had taken until it grew a speck on the waves, and the darkness hid it from her sight.

Then, like Halcyone after her vision of Ceyx, she arose, pacing frantically her narrow room, wringing and clenching her hands, tearing her hair, and calling upon the departed by every endearing name, repeating it over and over, as though her voice could penetrate the dull ear of death, "The grave shall not separate us long. I will go to thee. To live without thee I should be more cruel to myself than death has been to thee."

The dark spell she feared had indeed come upon her, and nothing but the infinite power and love of God could exorcise it.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE CONVENT OF THE SACRÉ CŒUR.

IN a gloomy stone cell for penitents, in the convent of the Sacré Cœur at Rome, sat a nun on the edge of a narrow, hard bed. By her side was a little wooden table, on which lay a skull, a crucifix, and a knotted cord. A small lamp threw a faint circle of light around her and revealed a ghastly face, large sunken eyes, and thin worn hands, that held a rosary; while with restless, nervous fingers she counted one after another the beads, muttering, in a hard, cold tone, *Pater noster* and Hail Mary.

Nearly three months had passed since she discovered Richard Vandeleur on the battle-field of Castel Fidardo, and what ravages that brief time had made in her face and figure! Every sign of youth seemed to have vanished and left in its place a premature old age, pitiful to look at. The few locks of hair that escaped from the white bands of her cap were streaked with gray; the skin was drawn over her forehead, leaving the bones almost as visible as those of the skull at her side; her cheeks were hollow and haggard; her eyes, sunken into their orbits, burned with a strange wild light; her lips, parched and drawn, revealed the discolored teeth, from which the gums seemed to have receded; her long, emaciated fingers had the restless, writhing motion so significant in those laboring under some mental disease. From a neighboring tower on the Janiculum sounded the hour of midnight. Starting up and throwing the rosary on the bed, she began pacing the floor and talking rapidly to herself.

"It is no use, it is no use; all this fasting and penance, all the indulgences, all the absolution, will not soften or purify my heart. It is hard, hard as stone. I hate every one and everything. If they would not trouble me; if they would leave me day and night alone with the memory of my darling. I could kill those who tell me it is a sin to think of him. Padre Stefano will drive me to madness with his entreaties. What have I to confess? Forever the same thing, — that my heart is filled, filled with deadly hate for everything on the earth, and everything in heaven but him. I hate mankind because one of the wretched race parted us, and I hate God because when I found him he would not spare him to me, although I prayed as none ever prayed before, although I implored the Madonna every moment while I bent over him, watching the life go away that I had no power to keep. And Padre Stefano tells me God is merciful and the Madonna all love, and that she answers our prayers when we ask for her intercession. She has never heard me. The hosts of heaven were deaf when I cried. I thought my agony would have moved the pity of the Father on his throne, but he has no mercy for me. They have all conspired, the powers of heaven and earth, to drive me to eternal ruin. O," she cried, clasping her hands above her head with an imploring gesture, "my darling, my darling! if it were not for the fear of being shut out from thee forever, I would end this quickly and come to thee. I believe this suffering will atone for my sins, and that after death God will open the door and let me creep in, even to thy feet."

Then, throwing herself on her knees before the crucifix, she poured out a torrent of vehement, passionate prayers, that seemed to exhaust the wasted body, for the large drops of sweat stood on her forehead, and she leaned, panting for breath, against the edge of the stone shelf that served for a bed. Gradually the eyes closed, and the weary head fell forward. She slept, but only a moment, for she started up with a cry, and, seizing the knotted cord, scourged herself until her lips grew livid with pain. Then, sinking back again on her bed, she murmured, "Is this wasted and bleeding body the thing he loved and worshipped once? He would not let the winds of heaven visit me too roughly, and now I cannot make myself suffer enough to deaden the agony of my soul. But I shall leave this poor shell behind me. Happily I shall not take it into his presence. Ah! would he recognize in me now the Mona he once loved?"

Going near the light, she drew from her bosom a little bag of silk, and, taking from it a folded paper, she opened it, and gazed with intense fondness on two locks of hair, — one brown and slightly streaked with gray; the other of a darker hue, but soft and fine as the threads of a silkworm.

"Ah," she said, "my precious treasure! I have not seen thee for three days because Sister Agatha advised me to deny myself that gratification and it would gain for me an indulgence; but it is folly to promise me such impossibilities, to cheat my poor soul out of a little happiness." She pressed the two curls to her lips, cheek, and brow, and then, putting them back reverently in their silken cover, she concealed them under the folds of her serge dress.

And so the long night wore away to the wretched woman. Sometimes a few moments of broken sleep, then restless pacing to and fro, or vehement prayer that surely must have pierced the ears of the Almighty as it ascended like a wail of anguish through the silent air.

For several days after the death of Richard Vandeleur, Lady Dinsmore, Constance, and Guido devoted themselves with untiring patience to the half-insane creature. But

all their efforts to win her back to the interests of life were unavailing. The only desire she ever expressed was to leave Ancona, where everything reminded her too forcibly of the terrible scene through which she had passed. Lady Dinsmore at once acted upon this, and as it was of no interest to Mona where she went, they all turned their faces toward Rome. She met her parents with the utmost indifference, scarcely recognizing them, and utterly refusing to pass one night under their roof. The only place of refuge she desired was the walls of a convent; and so they took her directly to the Sacré Cœur, that she might be near Sister Agatha.

They often visited her, but came away more shocked each time by the terrible ravages grief had made upon her.

Filomena would wring her hands and say to Sister Agatha, with a burst of tears, "I have found her, but only to lose her again in a more horrible manner. If some relief does not come to her she will be mad, — but I am punished, I am punished justly." It was evident remorse for some hidden sin was preying upon her mind, which she either had not the courage or the desire to confess.

One lovely morning Sister Agatha entered the cell of Mona, and found her, as usual, pacing restlessly its narrow limits. "Come," she said, putting her arm around the poor mourner, and gently drawing her down by her side, "come and rest here for a few moments, and then we will go into the garden for a little while. The day is so lovely, the sky so blue, the sun so bright and the birds sing so joyously. Let the great loving heart of Nature soothe and heal your suffering soul. You can pray to God as well under the blue dome of heaven as here in this narrow cell."

"No, no," she replied, shuddering, and drawing away from the nun's encircling arm, "I hate the day. I hate the sun and the songs of birds. My soul is dark; all is dark within me. I love not the great heart of Nature, it does not beat for me."

"My poor child," said Sister Agatha, solemnly, "you are selfish in your grief, you are wilfully blind to the consolation of your religion. Believe me, there is no sorrow Christ cannot cure. You turn away from his pure pitying love, and cling to the memory of a sinner."

"Hush!" she cried, while a terrible look shot from her eyes, "do not call him a sinner. He died in the endeavor to save his enemy. What more did Christ do than that? It is useless labor to talk to me. What do you know of joy or sorrow, — you who have never loved?"

A furtive flush passed over the patient aged face of Sister Agatha, as she replied: "I have suffered even as you suffer, and I can pity you. When I outwardly left the world and hid my young suffering life in a convent, I did not put away the passion and desire of a human heart. I could not tear at once from my soul all the tender longing for love and the glad sweet life I had left.

"There were three of us, — my sister, my brother, and myself. We came of a noble but impoverished family. It was early decided that my sister, who was the eldest, should marry, and I should take vows, as our scanty means were only sufficient to dower one. The husband selected for my sister was a young man who had grown up in our society. I cannot tell you when I loved him. I always loved him. My mother died early; my father was a stern, proud man. There was no appeal, our fates were fixed by our parents. I saw him married to my sister, and then I hid my broken heart in a living tomb. Not long after her marriage my sister died. Then I might have been his wife, but my vows separated us forever. Mercifully that temptation was soon over; he died a year after his wife. But he did not die in my arms; that consolation was denied me. I was striving to find peace in our blessed religion. As I told you, when I left the world I did not leave with it the unquiet, restless heart, the longing and pining for the love I had known. My stern, cold life was a poor substitute for the bright happy home I had left. Not long after, my father died; then my brother followed him to the silent land, — my brother whom I loved, and my last tie to earth. I could not see him, I could not close his eyes, I could not receive his farewell. He died in Naples, and only after some days the sad news came to me that he was no more. It was not until every tie and idol was rent away, and I stood alone before God, that I began to lean upon him. I need not tell you of the struggles, the prayers and penances, the days and nights of sorrow, that filled up the sum of my life. It was labor, constant, unremitting labor for others, that healed, and at last cured, my wounds. Or, perhaps, I should say, it was because at that time I had something to love; for Guido was sent to the hospital, and to me he was an angel visitant. I took him into my inmost heart. What a comfort the child was to me! My interest in him has always been something to live for. God sends us the cure we most need. He saw an affection for some living thing was necessary to soften my nature and lead me to him, so he gave me that child. Through him I was enabled to renew my interest in life, and was led patiently to strive for an inheritance beyond."

When she had finished, Mona raised her hollow eyes, and looked searchingly into the face of her companion.

"And is it possible thou hast so outlived

such sorrow that thou canst speak calmly of it? No, no! my nature is not like thine. Such hearts as mine break, they do not bend. Nothing but death can heal my sorrow. Time only augments it. I shall never again smile in peace until the white angel touches me with his cold finger and stills my pulse forever. Some one comes," she said, as steps approached the door. "It is Padre Stefano, and I hate him; he would teach me to be faithless to Riccardo's memory."

But it was not Padre Stefano; it was Filomena. She entered nervously and sadly. Going toward her daughter, she embraced her and said, "*Cara figlia*, the doctor has come, wilt thou see him?"

"No," she replied, sternly, "I will not see him. I am not sick in body, and who can cure the malady of the soul? No, I will not see him. Why dost thou trouble me, *madre mia?*"

Filomena clasped her hands in despair, and said, with real anguish in her voice, "The child will not save herself, neither will she suffer us to help her."

At that moment Padre Stefano entered. Mona buried her face in her hands, and remained in stubborn silence.

"Hast thou scourged thyself, fasted, and said thy fifty paternosters, my daughter?"

Mona replied not.

"Hast thou tried to drive from thy heart the memory of a sinner? Hast thou centred all thy thoughts on the suffering son of God? Hast thou worn on thy breast the relic of San Francesco?"

"No," she said, starting up, "not the relic of San Francesco, but another infinitely more precious. Wilt thou see it?" and she drew from her breast, with a defiant expression, the little silken bag. They all gathered around her in silent expectation, but started back in horror when they saw the two locks of hair.

"There," she cried, "there are my relics, more precious to me than saint's or Saviour's."

"Daughter, daughter," said the priest, sternly, "thou blasphemest. I fear neither prayer nor penance can atone for such sin. Give me this object of idolatry, cast it from thee as thou wouldst a loathsome thing; it is that which keeps thy soul from God," and as he spoke he advanced to take it from her hand.

With a piercing shriek she pressed it to her breast, crying, "Do not touch me! do not touch this sacred relic, the only thing I have of him! No, no, let God curse me, but I will not give it up."

An ugly expression passed over the face of Padre Stefano as he muttered, "She is incorrigible. She merits excommunication."

"*Pazienza, padre mio*," said Sister Agatha, gently. "The poor soul is half mad with suffering, and it is only love and kindness that can win her back to the fold. Leave her to me. I soothe her, but you and Filomena only irritate her."

The priest left the cell with an angry countenance, and soon after Filomena followed. Again Sister Agatha drew the woman to her side, and led her to talk of those hours of happiness she had known in the morning of her love. She smoothed and kissed the silken ring of hair, gently directing her thoughts to the innocent little cherub who waited for her in the land of the blest. Gradually she became calm, and an hour after, when Sister Agatha left her, she was sleeping peacefully.

Filomena was waiting in the corridor, and when the nun appeared, she clasped her hands and said with eager excitement, "Let me speak to you alone, I have something to confess."

"Why do you not go to your confessor?" inquired the nun.

"Because I would rather speak to you, I would rather ask your advice; you are a woman, and can understand me better. God is angry, and he will not forgive me until I have made some compensation for a wrong I have committed."

She remained closeted long with Sister Agatha, and when she left the room her eyes were red and swollen with much weeping, but her manner was calmer and more confident. At parting, Sister Agatha said, "I fear it is too late, but we will do all that is possible to discover the person."

A few days after, Guido held a long conference with Sister Agatha, and when he left her room his face was very happy, as the face of one who has just known the fulfilment of a long-cherished wish. He went directly to the cell of Mona, for as her foster-brother he had the privilege of seeing her at any time. He found her sitting on the edge of the bed, her head bent, and her hands clasped with an air of the utmost dejection. She looked up when he entered, and her face lighted a little.

"*Come sta, sorella mia?*" he inquired, with his usual sweetness, as he drew a bench near her, and took her wasted hand in his.

She sighed wearily and replied, "The same, always the same, Guido."

"Why do you stay in this gloomy cell? A room lighted and more cheerful would be less depressing."

"No, no," — with a movement of impatience. "The light hurts me, I am better in gloom and darkness."

"Do you ever think, *cara mia*, of those old days when we played together in the garden at Santo Spirito?" he said softly. "It was long ago, but they were happy days, — were they not?"

"I have forgotten," she replied, with in-

difference; "I only remember the hours I passed with him; all else is a blank."

"Tell me something of him; you have never told me of the time you passed with him."

Her face softened as she recounted, almost minutely, the history of the sweet peaceful hours that she had lived with him, believing herself to have been his wife; for she seemed to have forgotten the revelation that parted them, and always spoke of him as *marito mio*. With gentle thoughtfulness Guido led her to speak of the scenes that would soften her heart, thinking all the while if she would but weep she might be saved.

"And in those days you always desired to please him you loved, did you not?"

"O yes! I obeyed his slightest wish."

"Then why have you not obeyed the wish he expressed when he lay dying in your arms?"

"What wish?" she said, vaguely. "I do not know. I do not remember."

"The wish that the memory of his love should make you happy even after he had left you."

"Happy!" she repeated; "how can I be happy when he is dead?"

"Remember how he loved you, how kind and gentle he was. He would not like to see his darling so hard and cold. He would rather she would weep tender tears, remembering always his love, and thinking always of him as a happy spirit in paradise."

"I cannot weep," she said in softer tones. "O Guido! my brain is dry and burning. Tears would cool and refresh me, but I cannot weep."

"Listen, my sister; do you know that, though you cannot see him, your beloved is ever near you? It is my belief that the spirits of our precious dead linger around us always, until our freed souls join theirs; then together we take our flight to the paradise of the blest."

A dimness passed over her eyes, and her lips quivered as she said with eagerness, "Do you think he is near me? and does he know what I suffer? If so, why does he not comfort me?"

"Mona," replied Guido, solemnly, "you repel him; you drive him from you by your hardness an stubborn grief. In life he would not have loved such a nature; and now his spirit, made more gentle and patient by the love of God and the light of eternity, finds no sympathy, no fellowship, with your dark thoughts. Try to be angelic as he is, and you will understand and know he is near you."

"O Guido, Guido!" she cried, clasping her hands, while her whole being trembled with a new emotion, "I bless you for such a hope. It may be my salvation."

Guido felt that then was the moment to work his charm. Whether by the power of illusion or the mercy of God, his only desire was to lead this poor wandering soul to the light. Fixing his soft eyes upon her, tender with the yearning pity of his soul, and concentrating all the sweetness and pathos possible in his marvellous voice, he sang the song that Richard Vandeleur had best loved, a few notes of which had trembled on his lips as his soul took its flight.

It was strange to watch the varying expressions that passed over her face as the power of light and darkness struggled together for the victory. But the demons were subdued and the Furies wept when Orpheus sang in the Stygian realm; and now, as the waves of sound arose and floated around her, the dews of emotion gathered and fell in a rain of tears over her pale cheeks and burning hands.

Guido bent his knee before the crucifix a moment in silent prayer, and then went out, leaving her to weep alone.

CHAPTER XLII.

NEITHER POVERTY NOR SHAME.

THERE was great astonishment expressed in society when it was known that Mrs. Tremaine was the affianced wife of Mr. Carnegie.

Mrs. Parlby shook her head dolorously, and said, "What a pity for such a nice man to sacrifice himself so completely!" And many of her disciples remarked with suggestive nods and grimaces, "What a fool a man must be to marry a woman who has flirted with the Prince Conti! If Carnegie does not want a scandal, he had better not allow her to remain in Rome this winter. Of course she does not love him. Her engagement is only a protection for her reputation. She will carry on the same disgraceful intrigue as before."

These remarks may have been true to some extent, though vulgarly expressed. But in vain the Argus eyes of society watched her, and could discover nothing. Slander, like the unsatisfied maw of Erisicthon, prowled about for something to appease the craving of its terrible appetite, but Mrs. Tremaine furnished nothing. Calm, serene, and more lovely than ever because of the slight veil sentiment, as the romantic called it, threw over her dazzling beauty, she was always with Mr. Carnegie, and a more undemonstrative, self-sustained lover never pleased the good taste of exacting Madame Etiquette. Helen met the Prince Conti when it was unavoidable, but with a certain manner which seemed to say, "Thus far shalt thou come, but no farther." At first he had

not believed it when she said "All is over between us forever." But now the truth began to dawn upon him. Wounded vanity, and perhaps the loss of the truest love he had ever known, mingled with a sense of defeat, gnawed at his very heart with disappointment, regret, and remorse, that made him but the semblance of his proud, imperious self. All noticed the change, and those who had suffered some pangs caused by his manly beauty exulted silently that now the tables were turned, and the destroying angel was being himself destroyed and consumed by the ardent flame the mischievous little god had kindled in his hitherto obdurate heart.

"Ah! he is really in love now," they said. "*Bravo! La bella bionda* has revenged our wrongs. He has walked over many a heart and crushed it under his proud foot. Let him suffer a little; it will do him good."

And so the tide turned in favor of Mrs. Tremaine, who went on her own way proudly and serenely, sufficiently employed in wearing her mask in a way to hide her real feelings, and in hushing and subduing the clamorous cries of her heart, so that the world around her might not suspect that she was acting a part. Mr. Carnegie was quietly happy, contented to wait, believing that when the old love had died a natural death, Phœnix-like, a new would spring from its ashes.

Lady Dinsmore had often wondered how society would receive Constance when it knew she was the affianced wife of one against whom, in spite of his talents and noble life, it had raised its unjust barriers. Sometimes she was a little anxious, fearing Constance might be wounded by impertinence or coldness; but when she saw how indifferent the parties most concerned were, she let matters take their course, giving herself no further uneasiness.

In the beginning of the season a clique headed by Mrs. Parlby, who had never forgiven Guido, and a few other *parvenus*, decided to place its ban on the gentle girl who had listened to the voice of affection rather than pride. The manner in which they showed their petty intention was by no longer including Constance and Guido in their invitations to balls and assemblies where the attendance of Lady Dinsmore and her daughter was solicited.

"Why do you refuse so many invitations this winter, mamma?" inquired Florence, a little pettishly, for Lady Dinsmore invariably sent a regret when Constance and Guido were not included.

"My dear, you forget I am wearing mourning for poor Mr. Vandeleur, and I do not wish to go much into society."

"O mamma, he was only a second or third cousin, and no one wears deep mourning for such distant relatives."

"Never mind, my darling, he was one of our family, and I choose to respect his memory."

Fitzhaven, young, immensely rich, and noble, was an excellent fish for aspiring mammas to angle after. But, strange to say, all their seductions were in vain, for he never appeared in society except in company with Lady Dinsmore and her daughter. Before half the season was over this disinterested clique began to discover they had made a terrible mistake, for the rank and wealth of Lady Dinsmore gave her *entrée* into society they dared not aspire to; so by banishing a poor Italian *maestro* and an unpretending girl they had lost the acquaintance of the most eligible of the English nobility in Rome.

Guido was aware of all this, and secretly grieved a little, but said nothing to Constance, who was so happy and contented in his love, that, if she noticed it, it never caused her a pang.

"Dear noble heart," he often thought, looking at her with adoring eyes, "I wish I were a king on a throne for her sake."

Sometimes he did speak to Lady Dinsmore of the change in society. She would smile, and say gently, "Never mind, my dear boy, it will be different in England. There the history of your birth will not be generally known. I shall see you yet in a position none will despise."

One morning Lady Dinsmore sat alone in her drawing-room. Florence had gone to ride with Mr. Carnegie and Mrs. Tremaine. A servant brought her a note; she opened it and read: —

"DEAR LADY DINSMORE, — Shall you be alone at five o'clock? I wish to talk with you on a matter of importance. May I come to you at that hour?

"GUIDO."

"What can it be?" she thought, as she hastily wrote an answer, which she gave to the servant, who immediately left the room. At that moment the thought occurred to her to tell him to come directly, as by five o'clock her daughter would have returned, or she might have visitors. Hastening after the servant to change the reply, she opened the door just as he was giving it into the hand of a respectable-looking, well-dressed woman. It was Filomena, who had brought Guido's note. Lady Dinsmore uttered an exclamation of surprise, and desired her to enter the drawing-room. When she had closed the door against the curiosity of the footman, she directed Filomena to sit down, and, drawing her arm-chair near her, looked long and steadily at the red stain on the woman's face.

Lady Dinsmore was very pale, and her

voice shook as she said, "Filomena, do you remember me?"

"No, *Signora mia*," she replied, a little doubtfully, "I think I have never seen you before."

"Do you not remember the poor English girl you nursed once through a long illness, and whose baby died in your arms?"

"*O Dio mio!*" she cried. "Yes, I remember her too well. I would search the world over to find her. Do you know her? Can you tell me where she is?"

"I am she," replied Lady Dinsmore, with quivering voice and tearful eyes; for the sight of this woman, whose not unkind face with its red stain had bent over her hour after hour of her weary convalescence, brought back too vividly many painful memories.

Filomena passed her hand over her eyes as if to clear her vision, and then looked with an intense scrutiny into the pale face before her. "It cannot be the same," she said, "it cannot be! But I forget, it was so long ago, and time changes us all. Are you indeed the same? Do not deceive me."

"I am the same," replied Lady Dinsmore, with a sudden pulsation of the heart. "But why are you so excited?"

"O my lady!" she cried, falling on her knees and clasping her hands, "I have a confession to make to you, a strange confession; but first promise me you will forgive me, and I will tell you all."

"Certainly, I will forgive you, my poor woman; only tell me, do not keep me in suspense," she said, struggling to maintain her composure.

"*O Signora!* your child did not die; I deceived you, he did not die."

"Did not die," she echoed, in a voice between a cry and a prayer. "Oh! tell me, does he live now?"

"Yes, he lives."

"Where is he? Who is he?"

"He is the *maestro*, Signor Guido."

"O Guido, my child!" she cried, raising her eyes beaming with gratitude, "my heart knew you and acknowledged you the first moment I saw you. Thank God that in spite of time and mystery my child still lives." Then, controlling her rapture, she said more calmly, "My good woman, are you prepared to prove this? Are you sure there is no mistake?"

"I am sure," replied Filomena. "I have every proof. But listen, *Signora mia*, and I will tell you all the story. After you were taken so ill with fever you were unable to nurse the child. The doctor ordered a wet-nurse, and I was the one chosen. My only child, a boy, was seven days old when I went to you. He was a lovely child, but so delicate and small, he seemed no older than the new-born babe. They looked much alike, and sometimes only for the dress I could scarcely tell one from the other. I had lost three; my poor Benedetto was very miserable because they all died, and when this little thing was born our hearts were bound up in it. But alas! we were very poor, so poor that I was obliged to go into service to get food for myself to nourish my child. It was sick and very fretful, crying almost constantly. In fact, it occupied so much of my time that I could neither attend to you nor nurse your child properly. Then the doctor told me I must send my baby to the hospital or leave my situation. *O Signora!* it was a dreadful trial for me. I loved this poor little feeble sick thing, and I could not bear to send it away from me. Then the thought entered my mind to send your child instead, and keep mine with me. You were unconscious and would never know it, and I thought in all probability you would die, and your child would then have to be sent to the Foundling Hospital, but in case you lived I would bring it back, and you never need know it had been away from you. I was not long in acting upon this temptation. Just as I had finished dressing my child in a suit of the delicate little clothes belonging to you, the doctor entered, and I had no time to change the rich robe of the other for the coarse poor things I had taken off my baby. Fearing I might be detected in my deception, I folded it in a shawl and hastened away, leaving my baby in its delicate robes sleeping by your side.

"When I reached the hospital I dared not present myself before Sister Agatha, who knew me well, with a child dressed in costly linen and lace; she would know at once it was not mine, and suspect some fraud. So I rang the bell, placed it in the basket, and hurried away without a word. Seven days after, my baby died with cramps; it was only sick a few hours. My grief was terrible, for I considered it a just punishment from God for the sin I had committed. But I determined after you died, — for I expected your death momently, — to take your child from the hospital, and love and care for it as though it were my own. Much to my astonishment you lived and returned to consciousness, and your first words were a demand for your child. Then, too afraid to confess what I had done, I was obliged to tell you it was dead. You were so quiet, and never wept nor moaned for it, so I thought — pardon me, *Signora*, I thought — it was some *disgrazia*, and you were glad it was gone.

"Then you know what followed. The gentleman came to take you away, but before leaving you wished to see the grave of your child. I accompanied you to the Campo Santo, and showed you the little mound that covered my baby; and all the while my heart was breaking with remorse and grief at the deception.

"As soon as you were gone I went to the hospital and asked for a child to nurse, telling Sister Agatha mine was dead. I saw at once she was very fond of the little Guido, who was as lovely as an angel. She did not wish me to take it away, but I would have no other, and so she reluctantly consented. I loved it dearly; in a little while it took the place of my dead baby. I cared for it tenderly, perhaps more tenderly because of the remorse that was working in my heart. But we were so poor I could not keep it long; I had to go into service again, and my Benedetto made me carry it back to the hospital. Then my Mona was born, my last child, but I never lost sight of Guido. I did all I could for the little angel in my poor way. He did not need me; he was the pet of the institution, and the especial charge of Sister Agatha. I saw him grow up talented, beloved, and respected; still I knew I had committed a great sin in keeping him from his family, but after you were gone it was too late to restore him to you. I did not know your name, nor where you had gone, and each year that passed made it more impossible to discover you.

"When my Mona was taken away from me, and all my trouble came, I knew it was a punishment from God, who would not forgive me until I had made confession and reparation. Yet for some reason I could not go to a priest. I preferred to tell Sister Agatha, and she promised to do all that was possible to discover the parents of Guido, and also to tell him the whole story, which she did this morning. It was to speak of this to you that he wished to see you to-day. It seems to me that the blessed Madonna has heard my prayer, and with my first effort to do right, she has assisted me by bringing me to you. Now I believe my child will be cured!"

Lady Dinsmore had listened to Filomena's recital in breathless silence, and when the woman had finished she said, "Was any other person acquainted with this secret but yourself?"

"Only my Benedetto, *Signora;* the people in the house and the doctor believed it was your child that died."

"But there is one thing that I cannot understand, — how he bears the name of his father."

"Ah, *Signora*, no one knew it to be the name of his father. His name was given to him by Sister Agatha; she called him Guido Bernardo for her only brother, who died in Naples a few weeks before."

"How mysterious are thy ways, O God!" said Lady Dinsmore. "This woman who was so kind to my darling child must be my husband's sister, the nun he so often spoke of." Looking steadily into the eyes of Filomena, she said, almost sternly, "I believe you have told me the truth. I believe this young man is indeed my child, my heart tells me so; but are you prepared with your husband to assert this on your oath?"

"Yes, with a thousand oaths if it is necessary; but O *Signora mia!* tell me you forgive me, and will not punish me!"

"You did me a great wrong, but I forgive you fully and freely. My heart is too full of gratitude to cherish resentment. Now go, I need to be alone; go, and send Signor Guido to me directly; do not speak to him of what has occurred. I wish to be the first to tell him he is my child."

An hour after, when Guido entered the room, Lady Dinsmore came toward him with extended arms, and, throwing herself on his breast, amid tears and sobs, she exclaimed, "My child, my darling child!"

Guido thought for a moment she was laboring under some mental derangement, until with a great effort she calmed herself so as to speak coherently. Then she drew him down by her side, and with his hands clasped in hers, she told him all the story that Filomena had just related to her. It is needless to describe the explanations, the surprise, the joy and rapture of the mother and child, who loved each other tenderly before they knew of the tie existing between them. Lady Dinsmore pushed back the hair from Guido's forehead, and, looking into his face, believed she discovered a hundred traces of resemblance to the beloved dead that she had not noticed before. As she leaned her head on the shoulder of her child, the past came back so vividly that she almost thought it to be the Guido of her youth who caressed her, instead of his son.

Florence's astonishment was no greater than her delight when she knew Guido was her brother. What an infinity of questions had to be answered, what explanations and revelations, before all were satisfied and convinced! But at the end of a week it was known throughout Rome, both in Italian and foreign society, that the poor young singer, the foundling of Santo Spirito, was legally acknowledged as the legitimate son of a noble English lady. Then how Mrs. Grundy regretted, and Mrs. Parlby and her clique sighed, because they had not had discernment enough to discover the blue blood! But it was too late; society had made one of its stupid mistakes, which it tried to atone for afterwards by cringing and fawning and useless sycophancy.

Constance did feel a little exultation in her heart, but she looked into Guido's face with the same true eyes, and said, "You must not think I love you any better, or feel any more pride in you, now I know you to be Lady Dinsmore's son, than I did before. It is you I love, your own dear, noble self."

"Ah, my darling," he replied fondly, "it is a beautiful reward for your disinterested love; I am so thankful, now I can give you a position worthy of you."

There was a visit of the whole happy party to Sister Agatha, and an affecting interview between her and Lady Dinsmore. The little bundle of linen and lace was brought out, examined, and wept over with tears of mingled joy and sadness. Then Sister Agatha put them reverently away, for they seemed a part of the little angel who had nestled so lovingly to her lonely heart.

Lady Dinsmore would scarcely spare her son from her sight. She was not contented until he was living under the same roof, sat opposite her at table, was the first to welcome her in the morning, and the last to say good night. If Florence had been less amiable, and if her affections had not been bestowed on another, she might have been a little jealous; but as it was, she only assisted her mamma to pet and spoil her new-found brother.

Guido was supremely happy. One by one the sorrows of his life had been taken away, and now he seemed endowed with every blessing; a mother, sister, love, friends, wealth, and birth were all bestowed upon him by the munificent hand of the Giver of good. He acknowledged it all with solemn gratitude, and in the true piety of his nature prayed for humility, lest his prosperity should cause him to forget the sad discipline of his life.

There was a *festa* at the Sacré Cœur, and Guido had promised the Superior to sing the vespers. Lady Dinsmore and Constance were there, and before the altar knelt Filomena, apparently praying devoutly, but at the same time glancing anxiously at the private door which led from the chapel to the convent. All the nuns had entered, and were kneeling in their respective places, their black-veiled heads bowed over their rosaries. The altar-boy was lighting the candles around the altar, and the officiating priest, in his robes of lace and gold-embroidered stole, was muttering in an indistinct voice the prayers. It was an hour before *Ave Maria*, and the golden sunlight fell in long, slanting rays through the pictured windows of the little chapel, turning into dusky gold the branched candlesticks of the altar. All was silence, save the murmuring of the priest, the tinkling of the swinging censer, and the low solemn tones of the organ.

Filomena's face lighted as the door softly opened and Mona entered, leaning on the arm of Sister Agatha. Her face was as ghastly pale as ever, but her lips had lost their hard expression, and her eyes their wild, restless stare. She knelt between her mother and Sister Agatha at the altar, and, burying her face in her hands, remained as motionless as a statue.

The little chapel was filled with the sweetest harmony as Guido sang. The streams of sunlight grew dusky and faint. The white cloud of incense rose and floated away into the arched roof, like the soft flutter of an angel's wing. The face of the marble Madonna beamed with infinite love as she bent over the sleeping child in her arms. The wounds of the crucified Christ seemed to bleed afresh, and the tears to flow down his worn face. All was pity, tenderness, and calm. The twilight hour, the exquisite music, and the solemn silence of each kneeling worshipper, were a spell of peace that could not fail to soothe and calm the restless heart of the mourner. Gradually the dark cloud that had enshrouded her so long rose and floated away, and she saw the blue heavens pierced with angel faces, which all smiled compassion and pity upon her. And one who bore the likeness of him she had loved on earth stretched out his arms, seeming to draw her up even to the throne of Him who sitteth in the heavens.

Sister Agatha saw a smile of almost ecstasy pass over her face, as she clasped her hands and raised her eyes to the pictured Christ bending above her, and Filomena, who was watching her, knew that her child was saved. The consolation of her holy religion, and the power of music, blessed by God, had exorcised the dark spirit, as when the youthful David touched his harp and sang before Saul.

CHAPTER XLIII.

UNDER THE LIGHT OF STARS.

"YOU are not well this evening, Helen," said Mr. Carnegie to Mrs. Tremaine, who was waiting in the drawing-room for the carriage. She looked exquisitely lovely as she stood, the toe of her satin slipper on the fender, and her round white arm resting on the velvet cover of the mantelpiece. Her dress, the most delicate shade of Rembrandt green, set off to advantage her golden hair and fair complexion.

As Mr. Carnegie looked at her in undisguised admiration, perhaps the regret that a thing so lovely must fade caused his remark respecting her health. "You dear silly goose," she said, lightly tapping his cheek with her fan, "why do you think I am not well? I was never in better health and spirits in my life."

"I hope you speak the truth, Helen," he replied gravely, "but that strange whiteness around your mouth, and those fitful red

spots on your cheeks, do not denote health. I think the excitement of the winter is wearing you out. I am glad the season is nearly ended, I hope we shall be quieter after it."

"Yes, I hope so," she replied in a low voice, pressing her hand to her side, for a sharp spasm almost wrenched a cry from her lips.

The servant announced the carriage and, a moment after, Constance and Madame Landel entered the room, both in evening dress. They were going to a ball at the Torlonia Palace, — the crowning magnificence of the season. Lady Dinsmore, since the discovery of her son, as she was anxious to present him to the best society, accepted invitations where she had declined before. It was an evening of triumph for Guido, for among the many distinguished guests none received more flattering attention. His youth and talents, connected with his singular and romantic history, excited in the minds of all a lively interest. The Mrs. Pariby clique were not admitted to this *recherche* assembly, so there were few to make envious and malicious remarks. His old friend and patron, Cardinal Catrucci, was present, and his congratulations were most sincere and cordial. "I always thought the dear boy was made of something more than common clay," he said to Lady Dinsmore, in reply to her almost tearful thanks for the interest he had taken in her son.

And Constance commanded a due share of admiration, principally for her beauty and grace, but also for her unselfish loyal love, that had accepted the young man when he had nothing to recommend him but his noble, gentle character. "What a beautiful proof of love!" many said admiringly, "and how justly her devotion is rewarded!" Constance would have been happy and contented with her choice if there had been no change in his position; but I must avow her woman's heart throbbed a little with gratified pride when she saw Guido surrounded by the most distinguished persons present.

Lady Dinsmore seemed to have renewed her youth; she was smiling, almost brilliant, and Florence trembled and blushed like an opening rose under the admiring gaze of Fitzhaven, who scarcely left her side.

"What a charming group of youth and beauty!" said the old Prince Torlonia. "Lady Dinsmore, I congratulate you; you have under your charge three of the most lovely ladies in the assembly, — different types, but I cannot tell which I admire most."

"Thanks," said Lady Dinsmore, smiling, "I call them all my children, and I cannot tell which I love best."

"Happy children, to be blessed with such a mother," he replied, bowing gallantly as he turned away.

Scarcely had Mrs. Tremaine entered the ball-room when the Prince Conti was at her side, card in hand, soliciting for a waltz.

"You must excuse me," she said, decidedly, but sweetly, while she clung to Mr. Carnegie's arm. "I shall only waltz once this evening, and with but one person."

"Then a quadrille?" he continued, eagerly.

"I am already engaged to the Duke of Fitzhaven for the single quadrille I shall dance."

His brow lowered, and he bit his lip as he turned away without a word.

"Why did you not dance with him just once, Helen?" said Mr. Carnegie. "The refusal seemed a little singular; I think it would be more politic to dance with him once."

"If I dance with him at all, I shall dance with him more than once," she replied, raising her truthful eyes to his face. "Pray, do not question my decision. Believe me, it is best."

He said nothing, but sighed heavily, looking after her, and sighing again and again, as Fitzhaven led her away for the quadrille she had promised him. Then he went to seek Florence, to whom he was engaged for the same dance.

"Leave me alone for a moment," said Mrs. Tremaine, as Fitzhaven, after the quadrille, led her to a seat in an alcove, where a large window opened on a balcony. "Let me sit here and dream a little; it is so cool and refreshing."

"Just as you wish," he replied. "I am engaged to Miss Wilbreham for the next dance; after that I will bring her to you."

So he went off gayly to find Constance, and Mrs. Tremaine, glancing around to see that no one observed her, stepped out on the balcony, and, leaning over the stone balustrade, looked down into the rose-garden below. It was a moonless night, but the heavens were radiant with the light of stars. The heavy air lay in a level calm around her; nature seemed reposing in a languid sort of swoon, faint and oppressed with the odor that Flora showered from her open hand. The sad, silent city was slumbering beneath her, like an aged, exhausted mourner, who composes her limbs and folds her weeds about her, — sleeping, as she had slept for centuries, pulseless, passionless, and serene. The music floated out on the perfumed air; the sound of revelry, the merry voices, the light laughter, all assumed strange weird tones, that seemed scarcely human to her morbid mind. She thought, "They are like the mocking voices of fiends."

A demon stirred the heavy air, and hissed serpent-like in her ear, "O the mockery of life! O the hollowness of joy! Know ye

not that each gay reveller is but a ghastly skeleton; that youth, beauty, and mirth are but the masks men wear; that under the smiling exterior is the heart filled with hot and seething passions, — envy, malice, hate, revenge, falsehood, deceit, and inconstancy; that life is but a mad masquerade, that will end suddenly when the great bell of doomsday sounds, and in the presence of the stern Judge every passion of the human heart shall be laid bare, every secret of the soul exposed to the searching white light of eternity?"

Thoughts like these rolled and surged through her brain until she clasped her hands to her head, and murmured, "O my God! I believe madness is coming upon me. Above the excitement, the pomp and fashion of life, these dark thoughts ever assert themselves. O, it is true when we drive from our hearts the angels of love and peace, demons take possession of the empty chambers, holding mad revels that waste and destroy the frail tenant!" She pressed her hand with a gesture of agony over her heart, and raised her eyes as if to draw pity from the silent stars.

At that moment a man stepped out of a door at the farther end of the balcony. It was the Prince Conti. In spite of the darkness he recognized her instantly, and, coming toward her, said, with eager joy in his voice, "At last I have found you alone. All the saints be praised for this opportunity!"

She did not reply, but, sweeping back her robes with an imperious motion, and raising her head haughtily, she turned to enter the ball-room.

"For God's sake, Helen, stop a moment, I have much to say to you!" he cried, in a suppressed voice, seizing her hand.

"What can the Prince Conti have to say to me?" she inquired, in a tone that contained not an inflection of tenderness, — calm, clear, and cutting, as the light of the moon reflected from an icicle.

"What can I have to say to you? what can a heart mad with passionate love have to say to the object of its adoration?"

"Oh!" she answered, with a little scornful laugh. "But the same old story you repeated long, long ago. It has lost its interest, because it contains nothing original, nothing new."

He looked at her a moment in mute astonishment. "*Madre di Dio*, can this be the woman who less than a year ago told me she loved me?"

"The very same," she replied, lightly.

"Helen Tremaine, do you dare to trifle so with me?" Coming nearer, he grasped her arm with a force and passion that left the imprint of his fingers on her white flesh.

She drew herself away with a look that made him tremble. Her mouth quivered, and something like tears started to her eyes, as she cried in a voice filled with the strength of scorn, "Love is not won by brutality, neither is respect! Prince Conti, nearly a year ago I told you all was over between us forever; and when I spoke those words, I spoke them with the truth of one standing in the presence of God. They admit of no change, no equivocation; they are as final, as irrevocable, as the sound of the trumpet at doomsday. They were not words spoken from lip to lip, but from soul to soul. If you have not understood them, it is because there is no germ of truth in your nature; I told you I loved you then, I did love you then, but — but I love you no more." She stopped; her voice was cut off suddenly, as suddenly as a thunderbolt descends from the sky; the words seemed to cleave the air around her, and die in the essence of silence. Neither spoke for a moment, but each stood looking into the face of the other, demons struggling in the forms of angels.

"And you love me no more?" he said at last, in a voice of mingled scorn, grief, and incredulity.

"I love you no more," she replied between her set teeth, with a sort of gasp that ended in a sob.

"O fair and false, you lied to me! You never loved me."

She grasped the railing a moment for support as she replied, in a voice that seemed to be sinking lower and lower, "I thought I did; do not reproach me, I thought I did."

"Curse you!" he cried, with smothered wrath. "You are all false. Curse you again and again!"

For a moment she forgot herself. Springing forward, she clasped his hands, crying, "O Ortensio, do not say that! it is too terrible."

All the fierce passion of his nature was aroused within him, and, flinging off her hands, he hissed out, "Try no more of your blandishments on me. There are others, who do not know you, to be your victims. You have played with me, and now you fling me away like a ruined toy."

A strange expression passed over her face. She folded her arms and drew herself up to her most queenly height, and looking at him with a little light laugh, she said, "Why do you blame me that I have taken the initiative in my own hands? If I had not deceived you, you would have deceived me, *n'est-ce pas, mon ami?* Rather admire me that I was clever enough to be so good an actor."

All the passion faded out of his face. He stepped away from her and regarded her a moment with something like contempt. Then he said in a voice as calm and clear as hers, "Is it possible you are Helen Tremaine, the woman who less than a year ago

clung to my breast, and spoke to me in words sweet, pure, and tender as an angel's, — words that lifted my heart for a moment from the baseness of earth to the truth and holiness of heaven, — words that have ever since sounded in my ears as the prayers my mother breathed over my cradle, — words that made me believe there were truth and purity in the heart of a woman? And they were false? and all that scene was but acting? I had enshrined you in my heart as the most noble, as well as the most beautiful. Why, why have you undeceived me? You have done yourself an irreparable injury, for I now despise what I have worshipped." For a moment he covered his face with his hands, and something like a sob burst from his full heart. Then he raised his head, his eyes gleaming like fire, and shaking his hands menacingly at her, he cried, "O woman, beware how you kindle this hell of passion in the heart of a man, and then strive to extinguish it by falsehood and scorn! Your day of punishment will come when there will be none to listen to the cries of your needy soul. I despise you as much as I once loved you, and I never wish to behold you again."

With a last glance of mingled scorn and anger, he turned and strode away.

She stepped forward, reached out her arms, and tried to speak his name, but her lips refused to utter any sound. Then her arms fell, her head drooped heavily on her breast; she seemed to collapse, to sink together, as one suddenly smitten with old age. Some one spoke her name, but the voice sounded far away; a supporting arm was placed around her just in time to prevent her falling. And fainting, for the first time in her life, she sank senseless on Mr. Carnegie's breast.

"Helen is not well! I shall take her home," he said to Lady Dinsmore a half-hour later. "But do not hurry Miss Wilbreham on her account. She only needs rest and sleep."

"It is very late, and we shall all go as soon as that madcap finishes her dance," she replied, glancing at Florence, who was floating like a zephyr on the arm of Fitzhaven.

The tiny clock on Mrs. Tremaine's mantelpiece struck the hour of three as some one tapped at her door. It was Constance, who had just returned from the ball, and could not retire until she knew if Helen was better. "If she sleeps I will not awaken her," she thought, as she knocked again softly. There was no answer. The light was still burning. She tried the door; it was not locked. She opened it and went in. Helen sat huddled up in an arm-chair, still in her ball-dress, her arms folded on her lap, and her head bent forward so as to conceal her face. Constance went to her and put her hand on her shoulder before she seemed aware that any one was in the room. Then she started and raised a face so haggard and worn with suffering that her friend cried in astonishment, "O Helen, what is it? what has happened?"

"Enough," she replied, in a hard, cold voice. "He despises me, and that is enough to madden me."

"Who despises you?"

"Who?" she repeated bitterly. "There is but one person in the world whose scorn or contempt would matter aught to me. O Ortensio, why, why did I deceive you? I love you, I have always loved you, and yet I told you a cruel, deliberate falsehood." She started up and commenced pacing hurriedly back and forth, her hands clasped over her forehead and the red spot burning on her cheek.

Then, pausing before Constance, she laid a hot hand on hers and said, "I am consuming with fever. My brain is on fire. I am mad, and yet I cannot die. O, I thought my heart would break before this sacrifice was required of me! I thought God would mercifully heal me with death. O Constance, to-night I stood alone with him under the light of the stars, with none but the stern eye of God upon me; and I would have given all the future years of my life to have laid my head upon his breast for a moment and heard him say 'darling' as he once said it. Yet coldly and scornfully I looked him in the face, and told him I no longer loved him. But I did it for his sake. I knew how he suffered, and I thought if I taught him to despise me he would cease to love me. I tried to cure one wound by inflicting another. But I fear by doing it I have driven myself to madness. I can be a hypocrite no longer. Let the world know I am dying of a broken heart. Helen Tremaine is no more; in her stead is but a shadow, — a cold, lifeless shadow. I shall never smile again until I smile in the face of death. O Ortensio! the memory of your curse, your scorn, your contempt, will haunt me day and night. It will follow me beyond the gate of time, and I shall hear it even above the roar of the dark river. There is nothing in life or death for me. Poor body, poor soul, drift where thou wilt!

"Go, Constance," she said, "leave me alone; you but intrude upon my sorrow; you are happy, and there is no sympathy between joy and suffering; go to your bed, to your sweet dreams of love and happiness."

"Poor Helen, dear friend," said Constance, clasping her in her arms, "I love you as a sister, we all love you; try and forget this fatal passion, and be happy with those who worship you."

"The worship of a thousand hearts is nothing; I would rather have one smile from

him now than the adoration of the whole world."

Constance glanced back at her as she left the room; with her dishevelled hair, crushed dress, swollen eyes, and pale, despairing face, she did indeed seem another person than the Helen Tremaine who had left her room a few hours before in the flush and glory of her beauty.

CHAPTER XLIV.

SHE SMILED IN THE FACE OF DEATH.

THE next morning Mr. Carnegie called to inquire after Helen's health. He found Constance in the drawing-room, and she came forward to meet him with a troubled face.

"How is Helen this morning?" he inquired, anxiously.

"O Mr. Carnegie, I am very unhappy about her; she has not left her room, and she refuses to see any one."

"Perhaps she will see me," he said, ringing the bell. He gave his message to the servant, and in a few moments she returned, saying the *Signora* would see Mr. Carnegie if he would wait. He paced the room nervously, glancing from time to time out of the window, or exchanging a few words with Constance on ordinary subjects; neither referred to Helen again. In a half-hour she entered, scarcely noticing Mr. Carnegie or Constance. She passed by them, walked straight to the window, and stood silently looking out. There was something in her appearance that startled them both, and they exchanged uneasy glances as they looked at her. Dressed in black, her masses of golden hair tied carelessly back with a black velvet band, from the contrast she seemed clear and colorless as carved alabaster; around her eyes were heavy shadows, and her white, firmly closed lips told of the mental struggle going on within. Constance left the room, saying softly to Mr. Carnegie as she went, "I am sure she will listen to you; try to comfort her."

Helen still stood looking perseveringly out of the window. It was not a pleasant scene; the rain fell heavily, and Rome, on a rainy day, is most depressing. The sharp gusts of wind drove around the corners of the streets and the few pedestrians who were exposed to its force folded their cloaks about them, and bent their heads as they labored along. Although her wide-open eyes seemed to be taking in everything without, actually she saw nothing; and if one had asked her if the day was dull or pleasant, she could not have told. Her mind was filled, absorbed, with that one terrible thought. A thousand times since she had uttered that falsehood, since she had perjured her soul, she had regretted it bitterly; she had even wished her tongue had been palsied before she had said the fatal words that had taught him to despise her. She seemed to be unconscious of Mr. Carnegie's presence, and he spoke twice to her before she turned sharply upon him with an angry "Why do you trouble me? Cannot you see I am occupied with my own thoughts?"

"I do not wish to annoy you, Helen; you said you would see me, and I hoped you might need me in your trouble," he replied, almost humbly.

"In my trouble! what trouble? Ah, I forgot; you played the spy last night, and listened to my conversation. It was an impertinent, cowardly act," she continued, with fierce anger; "but don't think I meant what I said when I told him I did not love him; no, for at this moment I love him a thousand times better than before."

"O Helen, why do you misjudge me? You know me incapable of acting the spy. Fitzhaven told me you were there alone, and I stepped upon the balcony just at the moment when the Prince turned away." He spoke sorrowfully and reproachfully; but instead of soothing her excitement it seemed to increase it, for she went on in a hard, almost insolent tone, "I do not believe you. You presume upon the right our engagement gives you to follow me and listen to me; but I hope you understand me when I say the words I addressed to the Prince Conti were not true; they were utterly false, as false as all my life has been, as false as the words I repeated to you when I said I would be your wife, and that I hoped in time to come to love you. When I said it I knew I was lying; I knew I could never love you, never. It was a farce, but it is now played to the end and finished, and the time has come when I must tell you so. I know you will despise me; I do not care what your opinion of me is; since he hates and scorns me, I wish all the world to do the same. I never loved you, I never could love you; and more, I never intended to be your wife!"

"O Helen," he interrupted, "why did you say you would be my wife? It was unnecessary; I would have been your friend always, and I had determined to trouble you no more with my entreaties."

"I feared myself, I feared I was not strong enough to keep the resolve I had made. I thought my engagement to you would be a restraint and a protection. But I never believed the sacrifice would be required of me," she said, drawing near him, and fixing her eyes on him with a strange solemnity. "I did not think I should live to be your wife. I hoped to die before the year had expired,

and then you never would have discovered my deception. For a long time I have suffered much here," pressing her hand to her heart. "A year ago I consulted a physician, and he told me I could not live long; he deceived me. I thought to have gone before, but I am still here. Now let me make a clean breast of it, and then we will part, — you with deep scorn and contempt for me, and I freed from a vow that has pressed heavily upon me ever since I made it. It is useless to wait, to hope; I shall never be your wife, never. The thought of it turns my friendship, my liking, for you into positive hate. O, how expediency and deception have blighted my life! It has all been a falsehood from the beginning," she cried in tones of sharp anguish. "I hate the world, but I hate myself more. And if you do not leave me, I know I shall hate you also."

A flush of wounded pride passed over the face of Mr. Carnegie as he turned away from her, but he said nevertheless, very gently, "Helen, it is not necessary to tell me this so cruelly. I have always told you I should be to you only what you wished. If you have no further need of my friendship, my kindness, I will cease to afflict you with my presence." He had reached the door, but he turned to look at her again, as he thought for the last time. Perhaps something in his face, or the thought that she was losing forever her best friend, caused a sudden revulsion of feeling. Springing forward, and throwing herself almost prone, and clasping his feet, she raised her eyes, wild with an agony of entreaty, crying, "Do not, do not leave me! I have no friend but you. O, have pity on me! I was mad! Forgive me, I was mad to speak such cruel words!"

"My poor child," he said, in a voice broken with emotion, as he raised her from her prostrate position, "I implore you to be calm. "Do not think of me, think only of yourself. It is unnecessary for me to tell you what I have repeated so many times. I am your friend through everything. Do with me as you will, I am always the same."

"But you understand I can never marry you," she moaned.

"Yes, yes, I understand it. I do not ask it. I do not wish it if your feelings oppose it. We will say no more about it."

He led her to a sofa, gravely and kindly, as though there was no wound in his heart.

"Rest here," he said, "and calm yourself by thinking of the peace and repose that await us all after the agony of life."

He drew a chair near her, and, taking her trembling hands in his, he held them gently and firmly; neither spoke. She lay quiet with her eyes closed. Gradually her convulsive moans died into silence, the lips ceased to quiver, and she slept from exhaustion. Then, looking at her long and tenderly, his eyes dim with tears, his breast heaving with suppressed sobs, he touched with his lips one of the golden tresses, and quietly left the room.

It was a glorious morning in March, and dozens of carriages were passing out of the Porta San Sebastiano to the meet near the tomb of Cecilia Metella. The greater part of the occupants of the carriages were in their riding-dresses, and near them cantered the grooms with their horses. Gentlemen in top-boots and red coats talked gayly to fair girls with sparkling eyes, white gauntlets, and jewelled whips. Conspicuous among the horses waiting for their fair burdens was a superb black English hunter, that pranced and pawed, impatient under the restraining hand of the groom. Fitzhaven had sent to Scotland for this splendid creature as a gift for Florence; but when he saw the sharp upright ears, small head, and wild eyes of the beast, he decided she was unsafe for a lady to ride. This morning, with a stubborn determination none could resist, Mrs. Tremaine insisted on mounting her. Mr. Carnegie implored, Fitzhaven advised, but she only replied, smiling, "I am sure of myself. I promise you I can manage her." She never looked more lovely, as she calmly sat on the prancing, pawing creature, scarcely controlled by the strong hand of the groom, surrounded by a dozen or more of her admirers, who lauded her in the most extravagant terms for her courage and spirit. Excitement had lent a flush to her cheek, that had been paler than marble for many days; and only a close observer could have detected a restlessness in the glance of her bright eye and a hard, determined expression around her smiling mouth.

The hounds were away with a whoop and halloo, and swift as lightning, freed from the restraining hand of the groom, the black hunter was off. The Prince Conti, riding by the side of the American heiress, flashed by Helen, and all noticed he did not salute her; but she alone saw the look of cold scorn and contempt that shot from his eyes.

Perhaps in all the world there is not more dangerous hunting-ground than the Roman *campagna*, — a vast undulating plain crossed with almost impenetrable hedges, and intersected with deep ditches. Innumerable ruins of tombs, temples, and aqueducts, partially covered with mounds of earth, weeds, and tangled vines, render the surface deceptive and dangerous; while unknown and abandoned excavations furnish openings and embankments down which the unsuspecting rider is often plunged headlong.

There was plenty of game to be brought down. The hunters and hounds were soon scattered in different directions. Mr. Carnegie followed for some time the rapid pace

of Helen until she entirely outstripped him and was lost in the distance.

The Prince Conti, a prey to the most uncomfortable thoughts, soon left the company of the heiress, whom he had only joined to pique Mrs. Tremaine, and, striking his spurs into his horse, dashed off, he knew not whither. He felt no interest in the hunt. He did not care whether he was in at the death, or whether an animal was brought down or not. So on he rode over miles of country, recklessly and rapidly, objectless and aimless.

It was about noonday when he found himself entirely separated from the others. Not a trace of horse or rider, hound or fox. He listened, not the faintest whoop or halloo sounded on his ear. All was silent as the ruined tomb near which he stopped. He must have ridden very far, for the dome of St. Peters made but a faint blot on the blue sky, and the tomb of Cecilia Metella was miles and miles behind.

Perhaps the tranquillity of the scene, the beauty of nature, the solitude and loneliness, touched the not entirely ignoble heart of the man, for his face grew soft and sad as he gazed into the distance, and tears, real tears, dimmed his eyes as he said, "Why did she undeceive me? Why did she not leave me always to believe her the angel I thought her to be? There is nothing so cruel as to be rudely awakened from an illusion. She has taught me to doubt all humanity."

Suddenly on a rising ground before him appeared a rider coming swiftly and surely in his direction. Striking the spurs into his horse, he sprang forward saying, "My God! it is a woman, and her horse is unmanagable. She has no control over him, and he is making straight for the excavations. Perhaps I can intercept her and avert a terrible calamity."

With his eyes fixed on the advancing rider, he dashed toward her. A moment after he grew livid as death, and a cry burst from his lips: "*Madre di Dio*, it is she; I will save her, or die with her."

Yes, it was she, Helen Tremaine. A calm white face, back from which streamed rays of golden hair, eyes lit up with a sort of rapturous enthusiasm, lips which smiled the divinest smile he had ever seen, small hands grasping tightly the bridle, a slight upright figure firmly seated, a flying horse with eyes of fire and distended nostrils, shot by him straight and swift as an arrow from a bow. He made one desperate effort to throw himself before the animal, to grasp the bridle, but it was ineffectual. He saw her pass straight on to certain destruction. But as she passed she smiled a loving, tender smile. Although she was face to face with death, she had smiled on him again, and that was enough. With a terrible cry of grief he turned and flew after her. He remembered calling out to her in passionate tones, of warning her of the danger; of imploring her to save herself; and that even while he spoke both horse and rider had disappeared down the embankment into the excavation below.

When he reached her she was leaning against a broken column, her hand pressed to her heart, gasping as one in the last struggle.

On her face were the unmistakable signs of death, yet around her sweet lips still lingered the divine smile.

"O my darling!" he cried, kneeling beside her, and taking her head on his breast, "tell me, where are you hurt?"

"I am not hurt," she gasped, "I am healed. Cannot you see I am healed?"

Then, nestling closer to him, and laying her hand against his cheek with a caressing touch, she said, "You know now, darling, — do you not? — that when I said I loved you no more it was an untruth. I loved you then as I always loved you, as I love you now. I said those words for your sake, because I thought if you despised me you would cease to suffer; but it broke my heart, Ortensio."

He could not reply because of his sobs.

Her little soft hand strayed over his face, and she murmured, "I am happy, so happy! You will think of me sometimes, darling?" Turning her face to his breast, with a sudden strength she clasped her hands around his neck. He held her thus close to his heart, and with mingled sobs and prayers implored her forgiveness.

How long she lay in that last embrace he never knew. When he looked into her face the blue eyes were still open, the sweet lips still smiled, but the spirit had passed away forever.

Hours after, one of the huntsmen, who had ridden far from the others, peered curiously down this abandoned excavation, and saw there, on a green mound by a broken column, the Prince Conti bending in a sort of stupor over the inanimate form, the dead face, of lovely Helen Tremaine.

CHAPTER XLV.

HELMSFORD HALL.

TWO years ago, I, the writer of this little history woven of so many threads, returned to England after an absence of some years. Among the letters awaiting my arrival was one from Lady Dinsmore, inviting me to Helmsford, to celebrate the anniversary of the marriage of her daughter to the Duke of Fitzhaven. This invitation I gladly accepted, as for a long time I had heard

little of the characters that had interested me so much some years before.

It was near the close of a delightful June day that I arrived at the Helmsford station. I had scarcely touched the platform when I was clasped in the warm embrace of Guido, now the perfect type of a handsome English country gentleman.

"Come," he said, "the servants will attend to your luggage, my mother and Constance are impatient to see you." He led me to a handsome trap, I seated myself, the groom sprang up behind, and Guido, taking the reins, drove swiftly toward Helmsford.

I was interested, as well as pleased, to notice the respect and evident affection with which the tenantry greeted this young man, as we passed over the estate lying between the station and the Hall. Although he was not a Vandeleur, he seemed to have found a warm place in their hearts.

Twenty years before, I had visited Helmsford with poor Richard Vandeleur, then fresh from college, with all a boy's ardent hopes for the future. I had loved him well, and tears dimmed my eyes as I thought of him, with all those hopes unfulfilled, lying in his silent grave, and a stranger occupying his place.

As we drove up the avenue I felt a little saddened by these thoughts, but when I saw the charming group that awaited me on the terrace, old memories vanished, and I was prepared to enjoy the present.

There was Lady Dinsmore looking scarcely a day older than she did eight years before, when she told me with tears of joy that she had discovered her son, and the singular history of the deception that had been practised upon her. By her side stood Constance, a little more matronly, but lovelier, if possible, than in her girlhood. Near them Fitzhaven and Florence, a merry, comely couple, and a little behind, arranged, as Florence said, like the tableau of a play, stood Madame Landel, and by her side a pale mournful woman, dressed in widow's weeds, with the most glorious eyes I had ever seen, holding by the hand a lovely boy of three years. The woman was Mona, and the little boy was Guido's son, whom they brought forward and presented as Richard Vandeleur. Guido caught him up in his arms with the fondest look I have ever seen in a father's face. "Is he not a fine boy? He is Vandeleur of Helmsford, and I think he will be a worthy representative of the family. All the people idolize him, they always call him Vandeleur. In fact, I think they forget he has any other name."

After dinner, when we all sat on the terrace, Guido, Fitzhaven, and myself smoking our fine Havanas, the conversation naturally turned to the old days.

"Tell me first," I said, "what has become of Mr. Carnegie?"

"We invited him here for a month," replied Lady Dinsmore, "but he did not accept. He has lived almost the life of a recluse at Carnegie Hall, ever since the death of dear Helen. Did you know that none of the physicians believed her death to be caused by her fall? There was no sign of an injury either internal or external."

"Indeed," I replied, "I am astonished. I thought she was killed almost instantly by being thrown from her horse."

"No; the doctors have decided that she died of heart-disease, from which she had suffered for some time, unknown to any of her friends. Of course, the fear and excitement of the moment caused the sudden and fatal result."

"We have all mourned deeply for her," said Constance. "In spite of her waywardness, she was very sweet and noble, and I loved her as a sister."

"You saw the monument Mr. Carnegie has erected to her memory at Carnegie Hall, did you not, Fitz?" inquired Florence of her husband.

"Yes, dear, and there is not a more beautiful thing in all Scotland. It was made in Italy at an immense cost, — they say, the half of his fortune. With the consent of her mother she was buried at Carnegie, and he spends his time, poor heart-broken man! watching over the remains of her he worshipped. It is said he has a room no one ever enters filled with her portraits that he has painted from memory. He never leaves Carnegie Hall. All he loves is there. He told me nothing would induce him to visit Rome. He seems to have a horror of it and all connected with it. Madame de Marc and Helen's mother and sisters spend some part of every year with him. He is much attached to her family, and has dowered two of her sisters handsomely, and married them to young Scotch nobles. The first daughter of the eldest is called Helen, and she will be his heiress, without doubt."

"And the Prince Conti, he mourned deeply for her, did he not?"

"O yes, indeed he did," replied Lady Dinsmore. "For a long time after her death he remained in a sort of stupor; his friends feared for his reason. However, he travelled two or three years, and when he returned home he was more cheerful, although he has never been quite the same. Two years ago we spent the winter in Rome, and he was among the first to call upon us. He was dressed in deep mourning, which he says he shall always wear, and scarcely spoke on any other subject beside his sorrow for her loss. He told me that shortly after her death one of his family left him a small fortune, by which means he had regained

two of his palaces and the most of his family jewels; but he added, with the dreariest sigh I ever heard, 'It came too late to make me happy; I do not value it, she cannot share it with me.' I thought he would never marry, but some time ago I heard he was engaged to a wealthy Italian countess,—a stern, dark woman, some years older than himself, and an exact contrast to our Helen."

"I have something to tell you," said Guido, laying his hand on my shoulder. "Last summer we had the honor of entertaining my dear old friend, the Cardinal. He came with his chaplain and servants, and stayed some time. He seemed delighted with everything, but I think he was a little disappointed because I had not converted all the family to the Catholic religion. He consoled himself, however, by thanking the Madonna that I had not turned Protestant through the powerful influence of these charming creatures. We tried to entertain him in the most sumptuous manner possible. It was a great pleasure to me to be able to return even to some small extent his kindness of other days."

"But we were all nearly driven to insanity during his stay," said Florence, laughing heartily at the recollection. "Our good country people, not being accustomed to the dress of a Roman dignitary, surrounded the carriage of the poor old Cardinal, and stared at him in such a way that we almost died of mortification, and one day he said mass in the little chapel Guido built on the estate for the Irish laborers, and they all came from far and near, as though it were a great spectacle."

"I think," said Constance, "he regretted more than anything that our baby was to be brought up a Protestant. Dear old gentleman, I am very fond of him, but I cannot change my religion to please him. Although I am perfectly contented that Guido is a Catholic, because he has always been one, yet neither of us wishes our baby to be. He is the representative of an English Protestant family, and so must follow the religion of his forefathers."

"We will go to-morrow and see the new school-house my precious mother has built for the poor, and all the other improvements she has made. They worship her as though she were an angel," said Guido, looking fondly at Lady Dinsmore.

"I think my people love me," she said, "but they love Guido and Constance equally well. And Mona and our baby are adored because they bear the name of Vandeleur. We live the most of our time here. I prefer Helmsford to Dinsmore Castle, Constance is at home in sight of the rectory, and Guido is always happy where we are. Yet we spend most of our winters in Rome, as we cannot be entirely separated from Sister Agatha, and Mona wishes to be with her mother some of the time, but she will not be parted from our boy for a day. She fancies he resembles her dead husband. So we arrange it to please all; we spend four months in Rome, two at Dinsmore Castle, and the other six here. We are such a happy, contented family now, I can scarcely realize we have all passed through so many vicissitudes and sorrows."

"What was it I heard the other day in London of a talented singer who gave a concert in Covent Garden to raise funds for a foundling hospital?"—and I glanced at Guido as I spoke. "Also of a new opera that has met with such a success? All the world is going crazy over it, and the composer, they say, enjoys a greater reputation than any celebrity of the day."

"If there is any merit in anything I do, give Constance the credit," said Guido, with his old sweet smile, as he encircled his wife with his arm, and drew her very near to him, while he pressed his mother's hand tenderly to his lips. "I owe all my success, all my happiness, to these two angels."

The little Richard was brought around for his good-night kiss, and was sent away in the arms of his nurse, followed by Mona. One by one we fell into silence and happy musing, while we watched the round white moon rise behind the row of tall lindens, touching with silver the spire of the old church, and flooding with soft light the park, garden, and terraces of Helmsford.

Travellers who have visited Rome, do you remember in a small cabinet of an old palace on the Via —— a picture covered with a blue silk curtain, which the custodian sometimes draws aside at the request of a visitor, and reveals the smiling face of a lovely woman; the slight, elegant form robed in pale blue satin, pearls on her arms and bosom, waves of golden blonde hair, and limpid blue eyes?

"Is she not lovely?" inquires the custodian. "It is the portrait of a young English lady who was killed some years ago at the hunt."

Often as the last rays of sunset flood the little cabinet, a grave, handsome man, clad in black, enters, draws back the curtain reverently, and gazes with tear-dimmed eyes long and tenderly on the face of Helen Tremaine.

Cambridge: Electrotyped and Printed by Welch, Bigelow, and Co.

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
A 000 086 006 4